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Province of Saskatchewan

Northern Education Task Force

Report to the Minister of Education

Province of Saskatchewan

Northern Education Task Force

Report to the Minister of Education Summary of Findings

November 15, 1989

90-01701/

Letter of Transmittal

November 15, 1989

Honourable Ray Meiklejohn
Minister of Education

Dear Mr. Meiklejohn,

On behalf of all the members of the Northern Education Task Force, I am extremely pleased to present to you the product of many months of study and deliberation - our Final Report.

Since March of 1988, when the Honourable Lorne Hepworth charged us with "Charting the course of education in northern Saskatchewan into the twenty-first century", we have listened to the concerns and ideas of people across the entire northern region of our province.

We have done our best to address these concerns by proposing 16 major recommendations together with a number of priority initiatives which span the full educational system from pre-school learning to post-secondary programming. The experience of the Task Force has fostered a renewed spirit of cooperation among northern people concerned with education.

It has been a privilege for me to chair this Task Force, and I thank you for the challenge.

Respectfully yours,

Roy Cheecham,
Chairman, Northern Education Task Force

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The Task Force is also grateful to Saskatchewan Education, Northern Division personnel for their administrative, secretarial, and clerical support. The Task Force particularly wishes to thank Myles Charles for creating a cover drawing for the Report which reflects the many aspects of northern education.

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Introduction

The Northern Education Task Force was established by the Hon. Lorne Hepworth, Minister of Education in March of 1988 to assist Saskatchewan Education, the boards of northern school divisions, and the board of Northlands Career College to *Chart the course of elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education in northern Saskatchewan*. The paramount mandate of the Northern Education Task Force was to identify educational concerns and issues in northern Saskatchewan through public consultation and to recommend ways to address these issues and concerns by proposing new initiatives and priorities.

The chief concern, viewed by the Task Force at the outset of its undertaking, was to determine ways to assist northern schools, teachers, and parents to halt the flow of students leaving the school systems prematurely. During its ten public hearings across the North and through the solicitation of briefs, the Task Force expanded its focus to include the issues of literacy, early childhood education, recreation, counselling, employment-directed training, and most crucially, community involvement in the school system.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education spearhead the development of early childhood education programs for four-year-old children in northern Saskatchewan:

- with emphasis on a home-based model that supports the role of the family; or
- where home-based programs are not feasible, consideration be given to school-based programs.

Recommendation #2

In order that the northern child's self-concept be enhanced and school-community relationships be positively fostered, it is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on native languages within the northern school systems by:

- the offering of native language classes at all levels including credit Cree and Dene language courses at the secondary level;
- the consideration of native language immersion programming at the elementary level in those communities where it is formally requested;
- the development of appropriate materials and curriculum guides for native language programming; and
- the training of northerners who teach native languages.

Recommendation #3

In order to enhance student progress in northern Saskatchewan schools, it is recommended that Saskatchewan Education implement a number of initiatives. These initiatives should include the following:

- the implementation of a continuous progress policy at the elementary level;
- the adaptation and implementation of a curriculum for northern Saskatchewan which recognizes the unique aspects of northern education;
- the re-affirmation of the importance of the development of a positive self-concept based on the cultural, linguistic, and historical contributions made by the people of northern Saskatchewan;
- the in-depth examination of current language arts pedagogy;
- the development or procurement of testing and evaluation materials which are unbiased and reflect present understanding of literacy learning; and
- the establishment of provincially-accepted standards for northern education.

Recommendation #4

It is recommended that a school nutrition program, based on the Saskatchewan Education community school model, be implemented in northern schools.

Recommendation #5

It is recommended that appropriate criteria, based on northern factors, be developed for common, northern-wide standards for school and community recreational facilities and programming. It is further recommended that in those communities where minimal standards are not met, adequate funding be provided to upgrade existing facilities or to construct new ones.

Recommendation #6

It is recommended that parents should be encouraged to become more involved in the school system as a means of ensuring that their children remain in school. To increase parental involvement a greater emphasis should be placed on public education and awareness, school and community contact, and local participation in the educational decision-making process by such measures as:

- the implementation of a public awareness program by northern educational jurisdictions which would involve the use of the media, public meetings and other appropriate vehicles;
- the training and employment of qualified guidance counsellors whose responsibilities would include home-school liaison; and
- continued emphasis on the training and development of local school boards to facilitate their involvement in the educational decision-making process.

Recommendation #7

It is recommended that a guidance counselling program be developed and implemented in northern schools.

Recommendation #8

It is recommended that the current policy which allows for changes in the school year to meet local community needs be maintained. It is further recommended that present procedures for such changes continue to require school division approval.

Recommendation #9

It is recommended that northern high school standards be reinforced through the implementation of innovative practices such as distance education to increase the number of options available to northern students, particularly in the sciences and mathematics. It is further recommended that consideration be given to regional high schools in certain areas to offset the effects of low enrollments thereby allowing for greater specialization, increased options and better facilities.

Recommendation #10

It is recommended that day care be provided in schools for students who are parents of young children where numbers and need merit this service. It is further recommended that classes in parenting skills and responsible personal and social behavior be included as part of this day care initiative.

Recommendation #11

It is recommended that post-secondary institutions continue to offer adult upgrading programs

and that cooperation among local education authorities continue to occur prior to the implementation of these programs.

Recommendation #12

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education coordinate development of a northern-oriented employment training strategy to prepare individuals for work in renewable, non-renewable, service, government and crown corporation agencies and industries. In cooperation with industry and govenment, it is further recommended that a human resource development strategy based on employment equity programs be continued and expanded.

Recommendation #13

It is recommended that post-school training opportunities for northern students be maximized through implementation of the following measures:

- enrollment goals in key training programs for northern students of native ancestry;
- expansion of distance education through initiatives such as the Saskatchewan Community Access Network (SCAN);
- upgrading and expanding adult training facilities in northern Saskatchewan;
- provision of university classes in northern Saskatchewan through the establishment of the Professional Access Program and the offering of courses through Northlands Career College; and
- increased northern representation on post-school boards of education.

Recommendation #14

It is recommended that opportunities and support for northern post-secondary students be maximized, since future development of the North will be greatly determined by a well trained, suitably qualified northern population.

Recommendation #15

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education facilitate the development of an education co-ordinating committee, comprised of representatives from school boards, Indian Band educational authorities, post-secondary education boards, teacher associations, and relevant agencies such as Saskatchewan Education, Social Services and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, to share information and to discuss educational issues of common concern.

Recommendation #16

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education review funding levels for northern education systems, taking into full consideration the unique factors which have an effect on northern education such as:

- the sparsity of population and travel distances;
- the costs of recruiting, communications, and maintenance;
- the need for instructional innovations; and
- the difficulty of providing adequate and acceptable housing for educational staff.

Chapter One

Background to Northern Saskatchewan Education

An Overview of Northern Saskatchewan

The Region

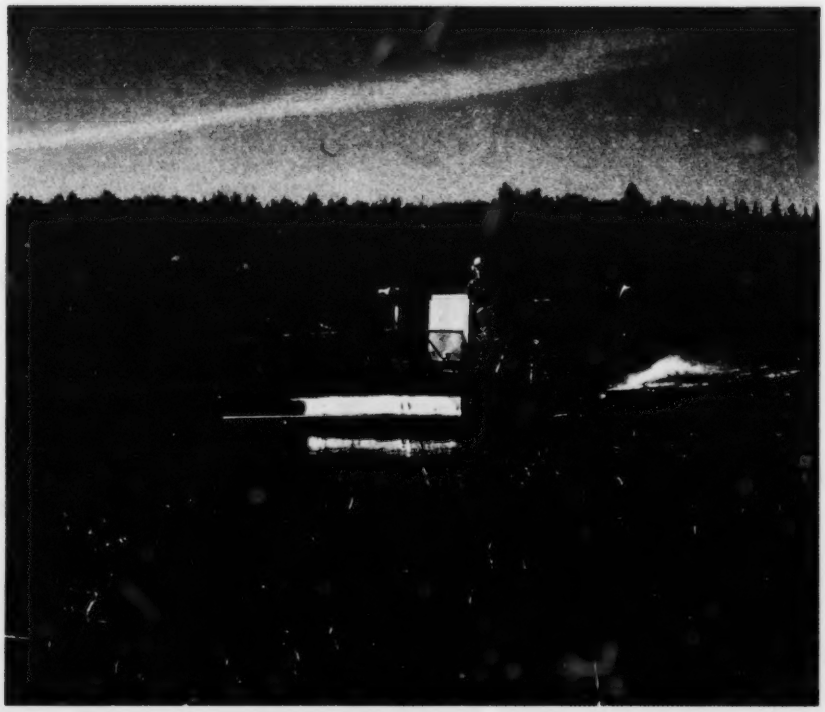
NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN COMMUNITIES

The area covered by the Northern Education Task Force mandate is commonly referred to as **The North**. It approximates the old Northern Administration District which corresponds roughly to the northern half of the province beyond the surveyed township grid which defines the agricultural area of the southern half. It covers more than 125,000 square miles extending from Green Lake in the west, to Cumberland House in the east, to the territorial border in the north. The area is dominated by forests, lakes, muskegs, and the Pre-Cambrian Shield. It contains some of the most beautiful country in Canada, as well as some of the most rugged terrain found anywhere. Its rivers and lakes are plentiful and inspiring.

The natural resources of northern Saskatchewan continue to supply much of its wealth. The fur trade provided, for centuries, the livelihood of the people who challenged the difficulties inherent in living and working in this region. Commercial fishing, particularly during the early part of this century, rose to economic prominence. Tourism has increasingly played an important role in the economy of the North. In the present decade, mineral activity has become dominant. The development of hydro-electric power continues. As well, agriculture has been pursued in various areas during the past forty years, but the harshness of the climate and difficult terrain have prevented widespread agricultural activity.

The vast expanse of land with its sparse population has limited integrated economic activity. Physical and climatic factors have limited growth. The region is tackled tenuously and development is gradual.

The People



People living in northern Saskatchewan are of various origins. During the fur trade the Cree moved westward from Ontario and Manitoba into Saskatchewan. The Dene, who originally inhabited the northern fringe of the boreal forest and the southern tundra, gradually migrated in a southeasterly direction towards Fort Churchill. (*Historical Atlas of Canada, Vol. I,* 1987) They later moved westward into parts of Saskatchewan near the present settlements of Patuanak and La Loche. The Athapaskan-speaking Dene dominated the fur trade in the Athabasca region from La Loche, to Stony Rapids, to the Cochrane River. Two groups of Cree came to dominate the Churchill River and Saskatchewan River fur trade. The Woodland Cree spread along the Churchill from Pelican Narrows to Ile a la Crosse. The Swampy Cree were dominant in the Cumberland House area along the Saskatchewan River. At the same time, the Metis moved westward and northward from Winnipeg to Fort a la Corne, to Green Lake and on to Ile a la Crosse. These groups of native people remained fairly static during the 1800's and 1900's with relatively little movement outside of their established territories.

The Great Depression of the 1930's prompted the movement of Euro-Canadians into northern Saskatchewan in significant numbers. Commercial fishermen moved northward into the Buffalo Narrows area. Metis from other parts of the province were resettled on agricultural plots at Green Lake. Miners were brought into the Lake Athabasca region. Logging activity spread northward into the La Ronge area and along the Saskatchewan River to Cumberland House. With this increase in activity came the first roads which in turn led to additional Euro-Canadian migration northward. The mining population peaked during the 1960's with the operation of the uranium mine at Uranium City and the copper-zinc mine at La Ronge. By this time approximately one third of the northern population was non-native. That ratio has remained fairly constant over the past twenty years. (**see Figure 1**).

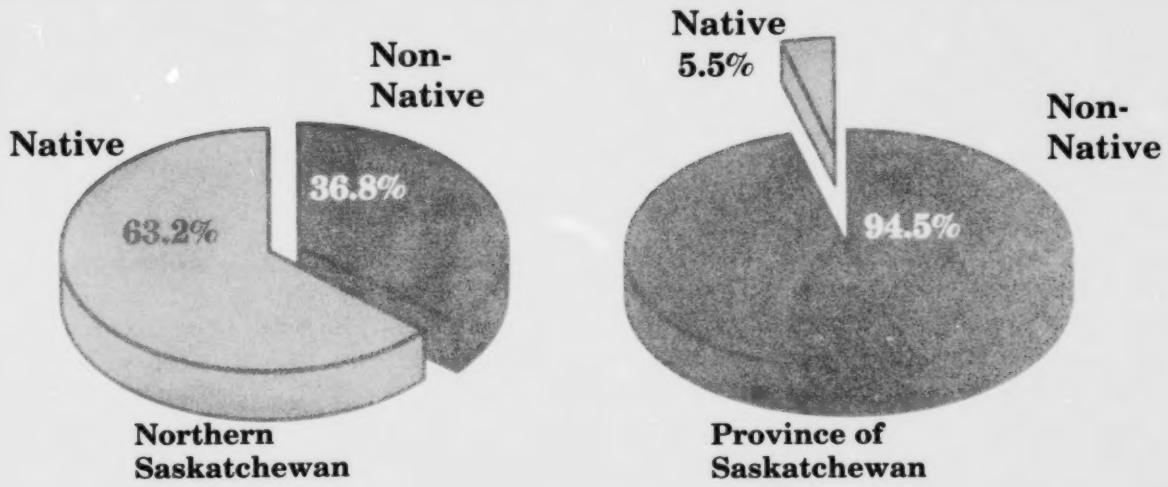
The impact of Euro-Canadian settlement in northern Saskatchewan varied from community to community. Most native people remained involved in the fur trade as their main economic pursuit. In fact, the nomadic hunting and trapping lifestyle of the Dene changed very little during the first half of this century. The Woodland and Swampy Cree also remained active in the fur trade, although some became involved in commercial fishing and mink ranching during the 1930's and 1940's. The Metis, particularly on what is commonly called the **West Side** of the North, did venture into other activities such as fishing, logging, mink ranching, and, in some instances, fringe agriculture. Mining had some occupational impact on the Cree of the La Ronge area and the Dene of the Athabasca region.

The introduction of government activity to northern Saskatchewan was to have a significant and lasting effect on that area and its people. Prior to the movement of Euro-Canadians to the North the only institutional presence was the church and, in an economic sense, the Hudson's Bay Company. The effect of government, as it was known in the South, was almost nonexistent. The implementation of hunting and fishing regulations were the first government intrusions. Therefore, it was the Department of Natural Resources which spearheaded the opening of government offices in northern communities. The first permanent northern settlement was located at Cumberland House, followed by Ile a la Crosse, La Loche, and La Ronge. Others developed during the fur trade, but only on a small and often temporary scale. The influx of commercial fishermen gave rise to the settlements of Buffalo Narrows, Pinehouse, and Wollaston Lake. Mining activity spurred the development of La Ronge, Uranium City, and Creighton. Hydro-electric power dams were the impetus for the growth of settlements at Sandy Bay and Southend. Logging promoted growth at Green Lake, Cumberland House, and Molanosa. The economy of the North was changing, and the role of government through the Department of Natural Resources expanded.

Included in this expansion of government activity was the introduction of social assistance programs. Family allowances, old age pensions, and welfare payments had a significant influence on northern people. The traditional pursuits, particularly trapping, no longer provided sufficient financial returns and government assistance programs began to play an increasingly important role in the northern economy. The new economic activities benefited Euro-Canadian residents of the North to a much greater degree than they did the native population.

In many instances the traditional economic pursuits were directly replaced by government sponsored social welfare programs. Gradually, the people of the North became dependent on government for support. This was a significant departure from the previously independent lifestyles of most native northerners.

Figure 1 Population of Northern Saskatchewan by Descent **1986 Census**



Source: Saskatchewan Education

Development of the Northern Education System

Development of Primary and Secondary Education

If formal education can be defined as the process whereby society prepares its youth for a meaningful existence within adult society, then education has existed for as long as people have lived in northern Saskatchewan. "... The process of education encompassed all aspects of the child's life. Children were raised to assume adult roles in an atmosphere of warmth and affection. Learning emphasized such values as respect for all living things, sharing, self-reliance, individual responsibility, and proper conduct. Children also had to learn how to utilize the environment most effectively for economic survival." (*Indian Education in Canada: Vol. I,* p. 3.) The traditional educational system, based on the family, had existed in northern Saskatchewan for many generations prior to the arrival of Euro-Canadians. In fact, it survived through the first three centuries of the Fur Trade era. It was not until there was a strong movement to change Indians and their lifestyle that a different educational system was introduced. This desire for change came with the missionaries and their perceived need to Christianize the Indian. The best way to do that, in their view, was to introduce formal, institutionalized educational practices.

The first northern school was started at Cumberland House in 1840 by the Church of England. (Littlejohn, p. 21.) Other Anglican schools were established near the present communities of La Ronge, Montreal Lake, and Stanley Mission during the 1860's and 1870's. (Friesen, pp. 1-26.) The Roman Catholic Church was also active in starting schools at Ile a la Crosse and other Westside communities. (Tymchak, p. 56.) The first residential school was started at La Ronge by the Anglican Church in 1907. (Friesen) These schools operated for ten months and presented a vocational/academic curriculum. Many Indian children were sent from northern Saskatchewan to Roman Catholic residential schools at Duck Lake and Guy Hill near The Pas during this period.

These early initiatives were undertaken entirely by the churches involved. They were assisted financially in their efforts after 1867 when the British North America Act made the education of Treaty Indian children a federal government responsibility. The numbered treaties signed between the Indians of Saskatchewan and the Crown, as represented by the Canadian government, all had clauses guaranteeing schools on reserves. "The Dain Report (1879) approved American practice with the provision that schools be operated so far as possible by missionaries .... The Department of Indian Affairs accepted the proposal, offering some financial support to upgrade and maintain existing facilities while also encouraging the

various denominations to construct new institutions." (*Indian Education in Canada: Volume I*, p. 7.) Preference was given to residential industrial or boarding schools where the emphasis was on manual vocational skills. In northern Saskatchewan these schools were built at Beauval, Sturgeon Landing, and La Ronge during the early 1900's. Only Treaty Indian children were allowed to attend.

During the 1930's, as more Euro-Canadians moved into northern Saskatchewan, concern for the education of non-Indian children grew. Preliminary investigations were commissioned by the provincial government during the late 1930's. They found a deep-rooted indifference on the part of the provincial Department of Education towards schooling in the North. As well, the 1939 Reid report cited the lack of a tax base as an obstacle to establishing schools in northern Saskatchewan. As a result, it was not until after presentation of the 1944 Piercy Report that concerted action was taken. (*Report on School Governance in Northern Saskatchewan,* p. 8-9.)

Mr. Charles Piercy, a school superintendent employed by the Department of Education, made recommendations for northern education to correct the deplorable situation in which less than half of the school-aged children were in school. He also found that eighteen northern communities had no schools. (Piercy, *Survey of Educational Facilities in Northern Saskatchewan*) First, Piercy recommended that the province assume responsibility for northern education. Second, he recommended that the system be funded by the province. Third, he recommended that schools would have to be upgraded or, in many cases, constructed. The newly elected government quickly acted upon these recommendations. Schools were built, teachers were hired, and the school population doubled during the next five years.

As well, an official trustee or chief executive officer was appointed to administer the northern school system. To assist him a school committee comprised of senior departmental officials was created. (*Report on School Governance in Northern Saskatchewan,* p. 10.)

During the 1940's and 1950's two separate school systems emerged in northern Saskatchewan. The federal government, through the Department of Indian Affairs, gradually assumed more responsibility for delivery of education to Treaty Indians. Church-operated schools were replaced by federal Day Schools on most reserves including Dillon, Canoe Lake, Patuanak, Black Lake, Fond du Lac, Montreal Lake, and Southend. Provincial schools had been built at Green Lake, Beauval, Buffalo Narrows, La Ronge, Stony Rapids, Sandy Bay, and Pinehouse. A majority of northern students now had reasonably local access to schooling.

Two other developments which were to have considerable ramifications for northern education occurred in the 1950's. The first Joint School Agreement was signed between the provincial and federal governments in 1952. This agreement covered the operation of the school at Pelican Narrows. It provided for the education of Indian, Metis, and Euro-Canadian children in the same school. (Ibid., p. 11.) The second development centered on the establishment of schools in the mining communities of Creighton and Uranium City. "While the white mining communities developed full-fledged local governments with local taxation and school boards (Creighton in 1952, Uranium City in 1956), native communities had only school committees responsible solely for maintenance and fuel." (Littlejohn, p. 73.)

The next twenty years were marked by the progression of these two initiatives. In the first instance, the federal and provincial governments continued to work towards the integration of Indian students into the provincial school system. More Joint School Agreements were signed throughout the 1960's with the federal government contributing funds for facilities and programming. In some communities such as Deschambault Lake, Stanley Mission, and

Turnor Lake, the province built schools and operated them despite the fact that most of the students were Treaty Indians. This culminated in a 1969 agreement whereby all Indian children were to attend provincially administered schools. Federal schools were to be transferred to the province. Implementation of this program became a reality in all northern locations except Dillon and Canoe Lake, where the Indian Bands refused to accept provincial administrative control.

Although only Creighton and Uranium City were initially granted local government authority over their school systems, measures were undertaken as early as 1954 to grant those powers to other communities. "... the basic policy of the Government of Saskatchewan for northern native people and communities changed from that of attempting to provide for equal opportunity through externally designed and administered programs to promoting, through gradual integration, the ability to conduct their own affairs without reference to government or other agencies." (*Report on School Governance in Northern Saskatchewan,* p. 11.) A Superintendent of Schools for the North was appointed in 1963. This was followed by the Ministerial appointment of three Metis residents of the North, three civil servants, and two observer members to the Northern School Board. This system continued in effect until 1974 when responsibility for northern education was transferred to the Department of Northern Saskatchewan.

Northern schools during the 1960's had faced many problems. Student populations were increasing dramatically, placing a severe burden on sub-standard facilities. It was difficult to recruit teachers for semi-isolated northern communities. The school was often viewed as an alien institution by the population it was meant to serve. The question of one school system

for all northern children was being addressed by the federal and provincial governments. Native northerners were under-represented in the decision-making process. The only high schools were located in communities where the Euro-Canadian population comprised the majority. The developmental tasks facing the newly created Department of Northern Saskatchewan were of considerable magnitude. One of the first measures undertaken by the Department of Northern Saskatchewan was to appoint a majority of northerners to the Northern School Board. By 1976 two autonomous, elected boards, the Northern School Board and the Ile a la Crosse School Board, had been created. A major capital construction program was undertaken to upgrade, replace, and build new educational facilities throughout the North.

A new funding formula, based on the province's foundation grant formula, but including several northern factors, was developed. Greater recognition was given to native cultural and language programs. Small high schools were started in several northern communities. A northern teacher education program with headquarters in La Ronge was started.

During the 1970's another major development in northern Saskatchewan education centered on the takeover of education on Indian reserves by the Indian Bands. The transfer of northern schools to provincial jurisdiction by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada proved to be a short-lived experiment. Indian reaction to the 1969 "White Paper" was universally negative. One of the cornerstones of that paper was the transfer of Indian education to provincial school jurisdictions. In northern Saskatchewan, the transfer was met with considerable opposition on the part of Treaty Indians. The Indian Bands at Dillon and Canoe Lake refused to go along with the proposal. By 1975 responsibility for Indian education on all reserves had reverted to federal authority. But the significant difference was that in many instances, the transfer of control was actually to the Indian Band. The 1972 Federation of Saskatchewan Indians' document, *Local Control of Indian Education*, clearly spelled out the expressed desire of Treaty Indians to control their own educational systems. As a result, all schools on reserves in northern Saskatchewan are now operated by Indian Bands. In some instances, such as at Stanley Mission, a provincially constructed and operated school was included in the transfer to the La Ronge Indian Band.

The first, full fledged task force on northern education since the 1944 Piercy report was commissioned in 1980. The 1980 task force [Task Force II] submitted *A Report to the Minister of Northern Saskatchewan on Education for the 1980's* in January 1981. "The questions of where the educational programs are headed over the next five, ten and fifteen years, as well as the structure of the control of these educational facilities and programs appear to be the issue." (*A Report to the Minister of Northern Saskatchewan on Education for the 1980's*, p. 3.) The investigation was prompted by continuing problems in northern education. "Student absenteeism, dropout, academic deceleration rates are so high that they call into question the very nature of education in the north." (Ibid., p. 1.)

Northern Saskatchewan was still facing problems in staffing and services, a lack of acceptance of formal education by the general population and the inadequacies of the curriculum and southern-based pedagogy.

Task Force II made several recommendations designed to remedy the problems identified in northern education. Five objectives were to accompany each of the proposed changes to programming:

- each student should be recognized as an individual with unique talents and skills;
- each student should preserve his cultural heritage;
- each student should learn best as an active participant in learning;
- each student should develop a positive attitude towards self and learning; and
- each student should be expected to deliver quality performance. (Ibid., p. 21.)

These objectives were to be the guiding principles behind recommended initiatives in special education, more health and social service related activities, and guidance and career counselling programs. The development of a unique northern education system with increased emphasis on native language programming, cross-cultural materials development, vocational facilities, and the sensitization of teachers to northern culture and society were also recommended. This task force also recommended that local school boards serving student populations of over 300 students be granted status as boards of education with the duties and responsibilities recognized in *The Education Act*.

Northern school divisions have made attempts to implement many of these recommendations. Native language programming has been promoted through the hiring of Cree and Dene language teachers and consultants. Materials development has been an ongoing activity of the Northern Division of Saskatchewan Education. A training program for paraprofessional guidance counsellors has been established. Various initiatives in vocational education have been undertaken. Dene High School in La Loche has extensive vocational training facilities. Recruitment undertaken by northern school divisions recognizes the need for sensitive, culturally aware teachers. The employment of an ever-increasing number of native teachers, currently approximately 25 percent of northern teachers, is a further indication of the positive reaction by northern school divisions to this recommendation. Unfortunately, many of these initiatives have been hindered by inadequate funding. They have not been uniformly implemented in all northern schools.

The Northern Education Opportunities Grants program, which was designed to assist in the development and implementation of these and other measures has been eliminated.

The Education Development Fund was established on a province-wide basis to provide financial support to school divisions that wished to implement recommendations contained in the *Directions* document. Those recommendations dealt with a variety of educational issues, including a particular reference to the circumstances of northern education. Local initiatives to provide solutions to the problems facing educators were encouraged. Considerable amounts of money were initially made available to school divisions, but the flow of that financial support has been altered to span a ten year time frame rather than the initial five year one. This has resulted in reductions in the annual grants available for projects.

In the area of local governance, the recommendation made by Task Force II for increased decentralization was considered worthy of further investigation. Soon after the presentation of the Task Force II report, education was transferred back to the Department of Education from the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. The Government of Saskatchewan stated its intention to modify local government structures in the North. Included in the 1984 mandate provided to Mr. Arnold Tusa, who was to review native education in Saskatchewan, was the request to examine northern education. (*Reaching Out: The Report of the Indian and Metis Education Consultations*) Tusa recommended a review of the organization and delivery of education services in the North. (Ibid., p. 57.) In 1986, the Minister of Education created the Northern School Governance Committee. "A committee will be established under Section 10(1)(A) of *The Education Act* to enquire into the options available and make recommendations of the most appropriate form of school governance in northern Saskatchewan." (*Report to the Minister of Education on School Governance in Northern Saskatchewan,* p. 1.) The committee carried out extensive investigations into various governance options. Included as part of this study were a series of meetings held throughout the North to discuss governance options with northerners.

The northern school governance review resulted in a series of recommendations for changes in the way education was governed in northern Saskatchewan. First, the dissolution of the Northern Lights School Division and the creation of two school divisions to replace it was recommended. Second, the school divisions of Ile a la Crosse and Creighton were to be retained with some minor alteration to the latter's boundaries. Third, the Uranium City School Division was to be disbanded. Fourth, it was recommended that school division administrative offices be established in the northern communities of La Ronge and Buffalo Narrows. Finally, an official trustee(s) was to be appointed to assist in the transitional phase. (*Report to the Minister of Education on School Governance in Northern Saskatchewan,* pp. 97-106.)

These recommendations have been partially implemented. An official trustee was appointed. The Northern Lights School Division has created administrative offices at La Ronge and Beauval although the creation of two school divisions has not taken place. There has been an increased effort to train local school board members. More emphasis has been placed on communication and the sharing of relevant information. Uranium City School Division has been dis-established. The boundaries of the Creighton School Division are to be adjusted by January 1990. Creighton and Ile a la Crosse school divisions remain as distinct entities.

Introduction

The absence of an adequate primary-secondary educational infrastructure in northern Saskatchewan during the 1940's and 1950's affected the adult population of the region as well as school aged children. Limited access to schooling meant that many of the adults of the 1960's needed to upgrade their basic academic skills. Foremost among the skills requiring improvement was English language literacy.

Most northerners grew up speaking either Cree or Dene, both orally based languages unrelated to English in structure, form, or approach. As northern communities moved from a migratory, hunting and gathering economy to a more centralized, wage or transfer payment base, the importance of adults having access to both academic and job-related skills training increased. Access was provided primarily through the community college system. Northern colleges offered courses in Adult Basic Education (ABE), technical-vocational skills development, and community special interest programming. The colleges also provided university accredited courses for many northern adults. The provision of adult education in northern Saskatchewan can be divided into three fairly distinct stages: Pre-college (1968-1972); College Establishment and Development (1973-1986); and College Amalgamation and Future Plans (1987 forward).

Pre-College Stage (1968 - 1972)

The year 1968 has been identified as the starting point for describing this stage because in that year the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan signed the Occupational Training Agreement (OTA). Under the terms of the OTA, the province received federal funding for the delivery of needed adult education programs. This infusion of dollars started the process of focussing attention on adult learners as an educational client group.

From 1968 through 1972, the Applied Arts and Sciences Branch of the Department of Education bore responsibility for identifying adult education and training needs and for development and delivery of programs to meet them. At that time, "northern Saskatchewan" included everything north of the city of Saskatoon. This vast and diverse region was served by a Department field representative based in Prince Albert. (P. Kalyn, interview, Prince Albert, 22/09/89). The field representative tried to involve local community leaders in the needs assessment and program selection process. Wherever possible, training was tailored to the specific needs of groups in the community. A major area of programming was adult upgrading, provided at two levels: "junior", which covered grade equivalencies 1 to 8, and "senior", which covered grade equivalencies 9 to 12. In addition, domestic science programs aimed specifically at northern women were developed and offered. Overall, the upgrading and domestic science programs tried to lay the foundation for northern people to change with the alterations that were occurring in their lifestyles and livelihoods. (Kalyn, ibid.).

In the skill-specific areas, a major thrust undertaken during this stage was the Training Opportunities Program (TOP). TOP set the model for many subsequent training endeavors by combining English and mathematics upgrading with technical skills development. Efforts were made to introduce employment-related skills that would enhance the learner's ability to use local resources and maintain traditional pursuits. This was accomplished by offering training in programs such as small motor repair, chainsaw operation and maintenance, and log and post cutting and peeling. Courses in guiding and tourist camp operation also formed part of TOP. Fledgling businesses such as La Ronge Industries became part of the training network when courses in furniture and toy making were offered to its employees. (Kalyn, ibid.)

Funding for the majority of adult upgrading and skill training programs offered in northern Saskatchewan during the Pre-College stage came from four sources: Department of Indian Affairs, Non-Status Indian and Metis Program (NSIM), Canada Manpower, and Department of Regional Economic Expansion (DREE). Both Manpower and DREE gave funding priority to courses that were employment-directed. Initially, however, these agencies also supported upgrading activities, either directly by course purchase or by providing funding to programs that had upgrading or ABE as an integral component. (Kalyn, ibid.) DREE also provided funding to establish Saskatchewan NEWSTART in Prince Albert in 1969. (J. Vickaryous, interview, Prince Albert, 02/10/89). NEWSTART produced programs and materials that were targeted at northern native people. Among these were: Fluency First, an English second language program designed for adults whose mother tongue was an aboriginal Canadian language; BLADE (Basic Literacy for Adult Development), and LINC (Literacy Initiatives for New Canadians). Both BLADE and LINC were designed using one of the first competency-based curriculum models, DACUM (Developing A Curriculum). (Vickaryous, ibid.) The greatest difficulties encountered in designing and delivering adult education programming during this stage of its development stemmed from the lack of infrastructure in the North and the absence of long-term funding. Facilities available for classes and accommodation for instructors hired for programs in the smaller and more isolated northern communities were often lacking.

In 1972, two events were to increase the focus on northern Saskatchewan and to identify the need for better educational services to Saskatchewan's adult population. These were: first, the formation of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan (DNS), which was charged with delivering all government services to the North and with building an infrastructure to facilitate this process, and second, the establishment of the Department of Continuing Education.

College Establishment and Development (1973 - 1986)

In 1973, the Government of Saskatchewan passed the Community Colleges Act. This act set out three primary principles for the development of a network of community colleges in Saskatchewan. First, colleges were to be community-based and community-responsive. Members of communities in the districts served by a college were appointed to the Board that governed it. Colleges were to involve communities in identifying adult education program needs, delivery methods, and course evaluation. Second, colleges were to use existing facilities to house programs in communities. Saskatchewan's colleges were not to become "institution based". Third, colleges would serve as brokers for accredited courses from technical-vocational institutes, universities, and other post-secondary training institutions. The La Ronge Region Community College (LRRCC) was one of the first four colleges set up in the province in 1973. It was responsible for programming in communities lying in the central region of the Northern Administration District (NAD), essentially the region of Saskatchewan north of Prince Albert. Adult education program delivery in the remainder of the NAD was the responsibility of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. Between 1973 and 1979, programming in the northern region of the province followed patterns similar to those established during the Pre-College stage. The need for adult upgrading and the availability of funding for it resulted in an initial emphasis on courses such as ABE 1-4, 5-10, and, in the latter years, 11-12. It was hoped that this emphasis on academic skill-building would assist northern adults to develop the prerequisites they needed to obtain technical skills or enter into professional training at a future date. The General Education Diploma (GED) was used extensively to provide academic standing within ABE. In addition to ABE, Basic Job Readiness Training (BJRT), Home Management, and Life Skills programs were offered by the college. Their overall aim was to help northerners adapt to and take a greater part in the changes that were occurring rapidly in northern Saskatchewan. On the technical-vocational skill side of post-secondary training during the early part of this stage, the emphasis was primarily on enhancing skills that pertained to traditional economic pursuits. Trapper training, small motor repair, and chainsaw maintenance and operation formed the core. Carpentry, bush camp and commercial cooking, prospector training, and surveyor aide training were added in the mid-1970's, clearly reflecting the increased mineral exploration activity going on at that time. (LRRCC, *Annual Reports*, 1973-1978). University classes were also offered through the colleges.

The La Ronge Region Community College consistently acted as broker for both Saskatchewan universities, providing access to off-campus classes for northern residents within its jurisdiction. The Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina had a full-time faculty position based in La Ronge from 1976 through 1979. This person worked closely with both the DNS and the colleges to provide social work training and to foster community development. (B. Jeffery, interview, Prince Albert, 04/10/89).

In 1976, West Side Community College (WSCC) was formed. This college took over programming in the western part of the NAD, from Green Lake to La Loche. At approximately the same time, 1977, the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) was inaugurated. NORTEP was designed as a field-based, elementary school teacher training program. Its initial group of students consisted of northerners, predominantly women, who had extensive experience as teacher aides in northern elementary schools. NORTEP offered university classes accredited by both the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina. In light of its close involvement with northern schools, NORTEP evolved under the control of the Northern School Board, now the Northern Lights School Division.

By the end of the 1970's and beginning of the 1980's, development of additional uranium mines in northern Saskatchewan was proceeding quickly. Conditions of the lease agreements signed with the Cluff Lake and Key Lake mining consortiums provided for increased hiring of local people to work at the mine sites. In turn, this development required more highly skilled labor. Courses such as the Pre-Technical Mathematics-Science program and the Mill Operator program were developed specifically to prepare northerners for greater participation in the mining sector. (LRRCC and WSCC, *Annual Reports*, 1980-81). However, efforts to deliver more technical skill training in the North were still hindered by the absence of adequate facilities. In 1981-82, developments occurred which helped address this issue. The use of a vehicle repair depot built by the Property Management Branch of DNS was given to West Side Community College and converted into the Buffalo Narrows Residential Training Facility. (WSCC, *Annual Report*, 1981-82). Combining space, equipment, and a residence, the Buffalo Narrows Facility allowed the college to offer programs such as heavy equipment mechanics and commercial cook training to adults from across the North. (WSCC, *Annual Report*, 1982-83). As time went on, the range of offerings expanded to include the General Laborers' Training Program, welding, cabinet making, millworking, heavy equipment operator training, plumbing, and gasfitting. (WSCC, *Annual Reports*, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86).

The first level of apprenticeship training in Industrial and Heavy Equipment Mechanics was offered at the Buffalo Narrows Facility in 1984-85, in conjunction with Eldor Resources and Kelsey Institute of Applied Science and Technology. (WSCC, *Annual Report*, 1984-85)

It was also in 1981 that La Ronge Region Community College received additional training facilities. A warehouse in Air Ronge, just south of La Ronge, was converted and equipped with the hardware necessary to turn it into the Multi-Purpose Laboratory. Acquisition of this facility allowed the college to offer a Chemical Laboratory Technician training program and an Environmental Technician training program in 1982-83 and 1983-84, respectively. (LRRCC, *Annual Reports*, 1982-83 and 1983-84). In subsequent years, the Multi-Purpose Laboratory was used to train northern wild rice growers. The college expanded its course offerings to incorporate para-professional, employment-related training. Among the institute accredited courses it offered were: recreation technician training, early childhood development worker

training, and administrative studies. (LRRCC, *Annual Report*, 1986-87). As well, the college broadened its technical skills training base by adding welding, diamond drilling, arc welding, and pre-trades training for women to its program roster. (LRRCC, ibid.) La Ronge Region Community College was able to offer its programs to students from communities across the North after 1981 when the college obtained a number of single-unit apartments in La Ronge which served as student residences.

The final event which changed the face of northern adult education in 1981 was the establishment of North East Community College (NECC). Initially based at Sandy Bay, the college assumed responsibility for programming on the east side of the NAD from the Department of Northern Saskatchewan. As was the case with its two elder colleges, North East Community College perceived a need to focus on ABE programs during its initial years of operation. However, by that time, money to fund ABE had all but disappeared. What was available came almost exclusively from the Northern Training Program (NTP).

NTP funds were channelled into Community Learning Centers (CLC's), which had been started in 1980 as a learner-responsive, community-based alternative to sponsored ABE. (Buckley, ABE and Related Areas: Status Report, 1982) Learning centers came to be used as "a place for study or assistance." (NECC, *Annual Report*, 1982-83).

This service afforded by the colleges proved very valuable to adult northerners enrolled in programs like NORTEP or the technical-vocational skills programs that were beginning to burgeon in the North. Help with mathematics and English skills was available at the community level, and this often meant the difference between a student staying in a program or dropping out.

Increasingly, as funding agencies channelled more and more of their dollars into employment-related training programs, ABE was relegated to a secondary position. The introduction of the Saskatchewan Skills Development Program (SSDP) by the Department of Social Services in 1984, helped fill this vacuum. As well, ABE frequently formed part of employment specific programs such as the Skills Enhancement for Trades Training (SETT) course offered at Pinehouse in 1986-87. (LRRCC, *Annual Report*, 1986-87).

Two other training institutions have a mandate to offer adult education in northern Saskatchewan. These are: the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research (GDI), and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT). Gabriel Dumont Institute was set up to address the skills training needs of Metis adults in Saskatchewan. SIIT is charged with delivering courses to the province's Status Indian adults. Gabriel Dumont Institute has offered a number of courses in northern Saskatchewan. Responding to the requests of Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS) Locals, it has delivered programs in three main areas: preparatory (e.g. pre-nursing); professional (e.g. social work), and technical-vocational (e.g. forestry technician training). Clearly, the 1980's saw a move toward more employment skills training for northern adults. This trend was formally acknowledged in 1987 when the Government of Saskatchewan amalgamated the three northern colleges into the Northlands Career College.

College Amalgamation and Future Plans (1987 forward)

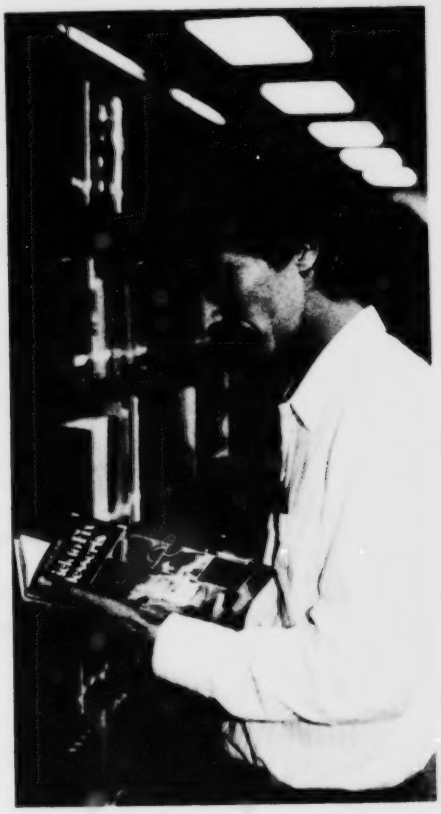
Prompting the decision to amalgamate the three northern colleges into a single institution was the government's belief that greater efficiency could be gained. A single board, representative of the northern region of the province was appointed in December 1987 and work was begun to bring the functions of the three colleges under one administration. The Northlands Career College's (NCC) mandate incorporates provision of adult education opportunities to northerners in the ABE and technical-vocational fields. As well, in light of the government's mandate regarding all regional colleges, NCC is to increase its university extension course offerings. Finally, reflecting the changes in the North and in the province over the past two decades, NCC is charged with providing "entrepreneurial assistance" to residents in northern Saskatchewan. (*Northlands Career College Mandate,* January, 1988).

NCC has established a planning cycle that is designed to assist northerners to see themselves within a broader regional, provincial, and national context. Community and regional meetings are followed by a general northern meeting which includes representatives from funding agencies. Programs are reviewed at each level, and plans are made for future programs to meet needs in the ABE, technical skills, professional, and entrepreneurial support areas. The goal of this process is to assist the college identify those programs that can and should be developed and accredited from a northern base, and those which are best brokered from existing institutions. (N. Clarke, interview, Prince Albert, 03/10/89).

NCC maintains a liaison with other training institutions that deliver programs in northern Saskatchewan. Although regional colleges are charged with the task of delivering the first two years of university Arts and Science programs to rural Saskatchewan (*Saskatchewan Education: Toward the Year 2000*), it was decided that NORTEP be expanded to include this service on a pilot basis. This decision was taken in light of NORTEP's long standing affiliation with both the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, as well as its existing support infrastructure. NORTEP is implementing a program to provide this "professional access" during the 1989-90 academic year. (Clarke, ibid.)

Northlands Career College has undertaken initiatives to provide learning opportunities using distance education delivery mechanisms. During 1987-88, it offered two University of Regina classes structured around videotaped lectures followed by student telephone access to the professor. Student reaction to this delivery model was very positive. (U of R, Faculty of Extension, SW468/Admin 290 Evaluation, 03/88) Also in 1988-89, Northlands Career College established a distance learning program in several northern communities. This program offered classes from Athabasca University, an institution designed specifically for distance

learning. Tutors were hired to travel to the communities to give additional assistance, as needed, to students enrolled. Some 40 to 50 students, spread over 10 communities, were enrolled in this program. The college is also part of a body that offers advice and assistance to the Saskatchewan Community Access Network (SCAN) in its acquisition and development of software learning materials appropriate to outreach functions in rural or remote areas. The college will provide the learning center back-up needed for SCAN to operate effectively in the university and skills training extension fields. (Clarke, ibid.) Finally, Northlands Career College is researching the training needs of northern entrepreneurs. NCC has committed itself to help these men and women determine the type and level of training they need, then design courses to meet it. The college's long-term aim is to better equip these people to participate in northern development. (Clarke, ibid.)



Conclusion

The delivery of adult education in this region has developed through a variety of stages. Today, northern people have a great deal to say about what courses are offered and how they should be delivered. There is an infrastructure, both physical and systemic, to accommodate a much more sophisticated level of adult education in northern Saskatchewan than was the case in 1968. Given the need for efficient use of scarce dollars, the 1990's will require extensive cooperation among the various agencies and institutions responsible to provide northern adults with the skills they need to take greater control over the changes the new decade brings.

Present Status of Education in the North

There are currently two distinct school systems operating in northern Saskatchewan. The provincial school system includes the Northern Lights, Creighton, and Ile a la Crosse school divisions. The federally funded school system includes band operated schools within the areas of jurisdiction of the Prince Albert District Chiefs Council and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. In the provincial system decision-making authority resides with the school division boards of education. In the federal system the decision-making authority rests with each band council. In both systems there are local school boards or school committees at the community level. In both instances the roles of these boards and committees are advisory.

The provincial system has 33 schools located in thirty communities in northern Saskatchewan. There are 16 band controlled schools. In some instances a band, such as the Lac La Ronge Indian Band or the Peter Ballantyne Indian Band, operates more than one school in different locations. There are 5,304 students enrolled in the provincial system and there are 2,514 students enrolled in band controlled schools. (**see Table 2**). A majority of students in both systems are registered in the elementary grades. Two thousand one hundred forty-five grade 1 to 3 students in provincial schools, and about 1,060 grade 1 to 3 students in federal schools comprise approximately 41 percent of the total student population. At the other end of the spectrum there are 805 grade 10 to 12 students in the provincial system and 317 grade 10 to 12 students in the band controlled schools for approximately 15 percent of the total school population. It should be noted that only ten northern schools offer full grade 10 to 12 programming. An additional seven schools provide grade 10 classes or in a few cases both grade 10 and 11 classes. Dramatic advances in northern education have been made in the past two decades. New educational facilities have been constructed in almost all northern communities. There are some exceptions, but most school plants can be considered adequate and in some cases, very good. Teacher retention rates have improved significantly, providing a continuity which was formerly nonexistent in northern education. Support services are provided by the school divisions or district chiefs councils. Cultural programming and native language instruction are accepted parts of schooling. Special needs are beginning to be addressed. An increasing number of native teachers are employed in northern schools.

A regional office was established in La Ronge in 1988 to provide the services of a regional director, a superintendent of education for the Ile a la Crosse School Division and the Creighton School Division, and coordinators for special education, curriculum and materials development.

Regional offices represent Saskatchewan Education throughout the province and make the department more accessible to the people it serves. The establishment of a K-12 regional office in La Ronge brings northern Saskatchewan into the network of six other regional offices serving central and southern Saskatchewan.

The regional office communicates the department's policies, procedures, and initiatives to the three northern school divisions and collaborates with their personnel, boards of education, Indian bands, and the general public to improve schooling. The regional office is directly involved with the implementation of new programs including the Core Curriculum, locally developed courses, and innovative pilot projects. The central mandate of the Northern Division of Saskatchewan Education is to provide global planning and coordination of primary, secondary, and post-secondary education in northern Saskatchewan.

One of the major changes in northern education has been in the area of adult education. The three community colleges which were started during the 1970's and early 1980's have been replaced by Northlands Career College, which now provides post-secondary, vocational, and university courses. The Northern Teacher Education Program which started in 1977 as a teacher training initiative is expanding to include the first two years of university Arts and Sciences classes. Gabriel Dumont Institute has increased its presence in northern Saskatchewan by offering several certification programs. The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College also offer programs for northern Indian adults.

Unfortunately, many problems remain. The dropout rate among native students remains unacceptably high, and cultural differences remain difficult to address. Recognition is all too often not given to unique geographic, economic, social, and cultural factors in northern education. Northern people, in many cases, remain alienated from the school system, thus essential public support is lacking. The lack of meaningful job opportunities in the North often makes education a seemingly futile pursuit. Linkage between education, training, and the labor market is often not visible to northerners. Social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, family disruption, and hunger have a negative effect on the school system. For these and other reasons, the Northern Education Task Force was commissioned to identify possible solutions to the remaining problems facing northern education.

Table 2

Northern Saskatchewan School Population by Grade

Sagastew

Community	School Name	Number of Students Grade K	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12
Band Schools						
Grandmother's Bay	Nihithow Awasis School	10	12	7	17	0
Hall Lake	Sally Ross School	25	32	13	9	0
La Ronge	Kitsakik School	30	78	75	32	0
La Ronge	Mikisiw Alternate School	0	0	28	7	7
Montreal Lake	Montreal Lake School	22	43	29	35	79
Southend	Reindeer Lake School	30	37	41	24	0
Stanley Mission	Keethanow School	50	104	89	99	51
Sucker River	Chief James Roberts School	6	10	14	0	0
	Subtotal	**173**	**316**	**296**	**223**	**137**
Public Schools						
Brabant Lake	Ospwakun Sepe School	4	19	18	6	0
Kinoosao	Apisasin School	2	2	6	2	0
La Ronge	Precam Elementary School	88	288	145	0	0
La Ronge	Churchill High School	0	0	81	231	217
La Ronge	Correspondence School	0	4	7	4	4
Pinehouse	Minahik Waskahigan	30	79	59	56	33
Southend	Apihtowkosan School	6	8	20	21	0
Timber Bay	Timber Bay School	3	21	36	15	4
Weyakwin	Weyakwin School	2	24	10	20	0
	Subtotal	**135**	**445**	**382**	**355**	**258**
	Region Total	**308**	**761**	**678**	**578**	**395**

Table 2 (continued)

Beaver River Region

Community	School Name	Number of Students Grade K	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12
Band Schools						
Beauval	Beauval Indian Education Center	0	0	0	0	113
Canoe Narrows	Canoe Lake School	11	28	27	20	0
Patuanak	St. Louis School	14	36	16	28	0
	Subtotal	**25**	**64**	**43**	**48**	**113**
Public Schools						
Beauval	Valley View School	25	75	55	67	64
Cole Bay	Lakeview School	3	7	11	3	0
Dore Lake	Dore Lake School	0	4	4	8	0
Green Lake	St. Pascal School	14	52	44	44	15
Ile a la Crosse	Rossignol School	43	90	77	89	67
Jans Bay	Jans Bay School	2	18	8	14	0
	Subtotal	**87**	**246**	**199**	**225**	**146**
	Region Total	**112**	**310**	**242**	**273**	**259**

Clear Water Region

Community	School Name	Number of Students Grade K	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12
Band Schools						
Dillon	Peter Pond School	16	36	32	29	0
La Loche	Big C Band School	14	37	0	0	0
	Subtotal	**30**	**73**	**32**	**29**	**0**
Public Schools						
Buffalo Narrows	Twin Lakes School	36	80	72	56	56
Descharme Lake	Descharme Lake School	3	6	3	4	0
Garson Lake	Garson Lake School	2	13	7	0	0
La Loche	Ducharme School	36	194	156	0	0
La Loche	Dene High School	0	0	0	112	188
Michel Village	Buffalo Hills School	1	11	5	0	0
St. George's Hill	St. George's Hill School	1	7	9	0	0
Turnor Lake	Birch Ridge School	14	29	36	34	0
	Subtotal	**93**	**340**	**288**	**206**	**244**
	Region Total	**123**	**413**	**320**	**235**	**244**

Table 2 (continued)

Neyaneun Region

Community	School Name	Number of Students Grade K	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12
Band Schools						
Cumberland House	Johnny Stewart School	6	17	18	8	0
Pelican Narrows	Pelican Narrows School	47	142	133	110	58
	Subtotal	**53**	**159**	**151**	**118**	**58**
Public Schools						
Creighton	Creighton School	36	130	130	163	84[1]
Cumberland House	Charlebois School	31	95	60	70	31
Denare Beach	Denare Beach School	18	0	0	0	0
Deschambault Lake	Kistapiskaw School	22	85	32	36	37
Sandy Bay	Hector Thiboutot School	30	127	74	46	74
Sturgeon Landing	Sturgeon Landing School	1	6	4	1	0
	Subtotal	**138**	**443**	**300**	**316**	**226**
	Region Total	**191**	**602**	**451**	**434**	**284**

[1]These 84 students are registered at Hapnot Collegiate in Flin Flon.

Table 2 (continued)

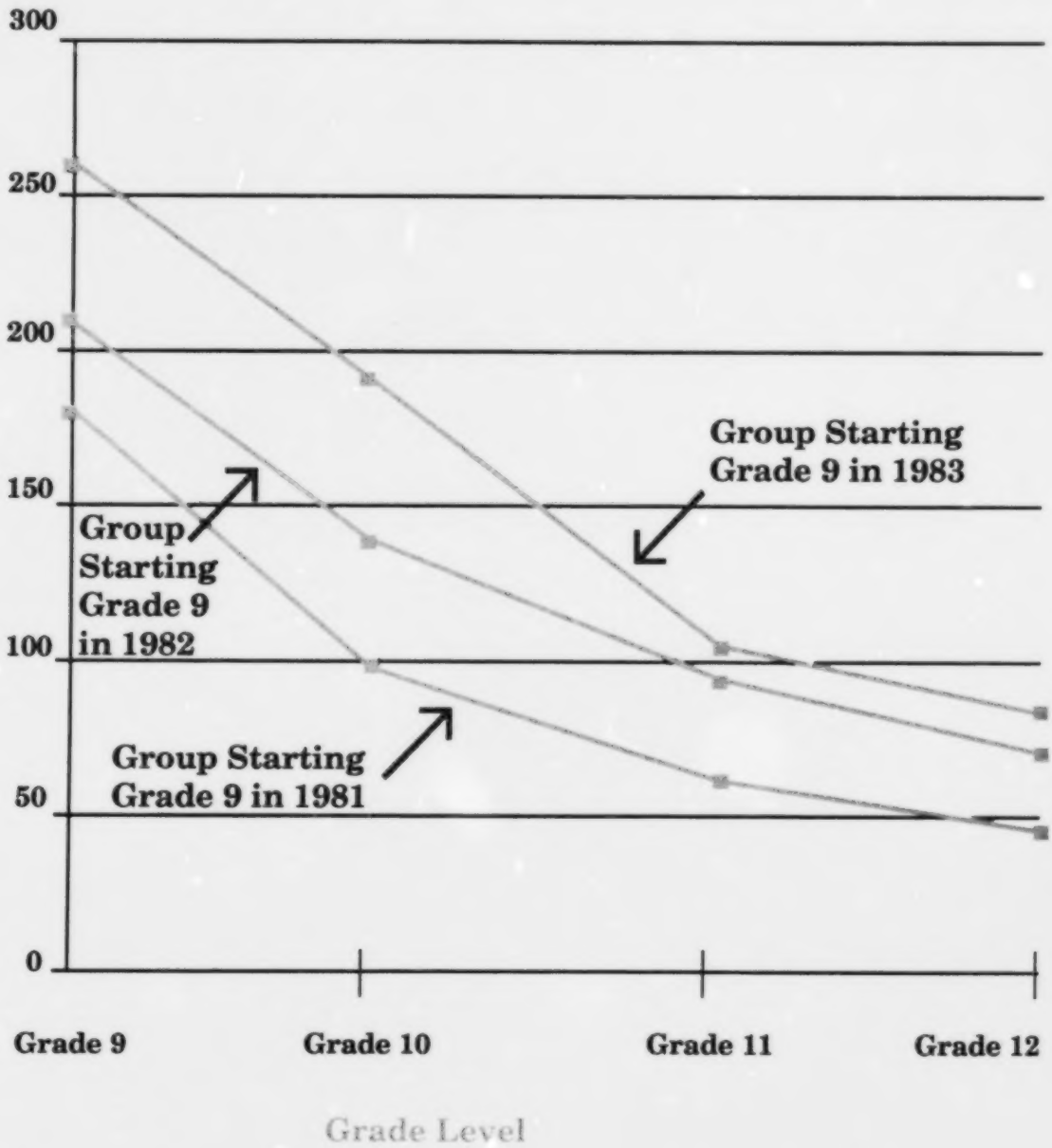
Athabasca Region		Number of Students Grade				
Community	**School Name**	**K**	**1-3**	**4-6**	**7-9**	**10-12**
Band Schools						
Black Lake	Black Lake School	49	91	60	52	0
Fond du Lac	Fond du Lac Dene School	22	56	53	34	9
	Subtotal	**71**	**147**	**113**	**86**	**9**
Public Schools						
Camsell Portage	Camsell Portage School	1	5	3	3	0
Stony Rapids	Stony Rapids School	10	21	15	12	0
Uranium City	Ben McIntyre School	2	9	5	8	0
Wollaston	Wollaston Lake School	29	141	21	31	0
	Subtotal	**42**	**176**	**44**	**54**	**0**
	Region Total	**113**	**323**	**157**	**140**	**9**
	Band School Total[2]	352	759	635	504	317
	Public School Total[3]	495	1650	1213	1156	874
		K	**1-3**	**4-6**	**7-9**	**10-12**
	Grand Total All Grades	**847**	**2409**	**1848**	**1660**	**1191**

[2]These totals do not include northern Indian students enrolled at the Prince Albert Indian Student Education Center or Lac La Ronge and Montreal Lake Band students at Little Red Reserve.

[3]These totals do not include the 84 Creighton students attending Hapnot Collegiate.

Figure 3

Enrollment Histories of Three Groups of Northern Students from Grade 9 to Grade 12



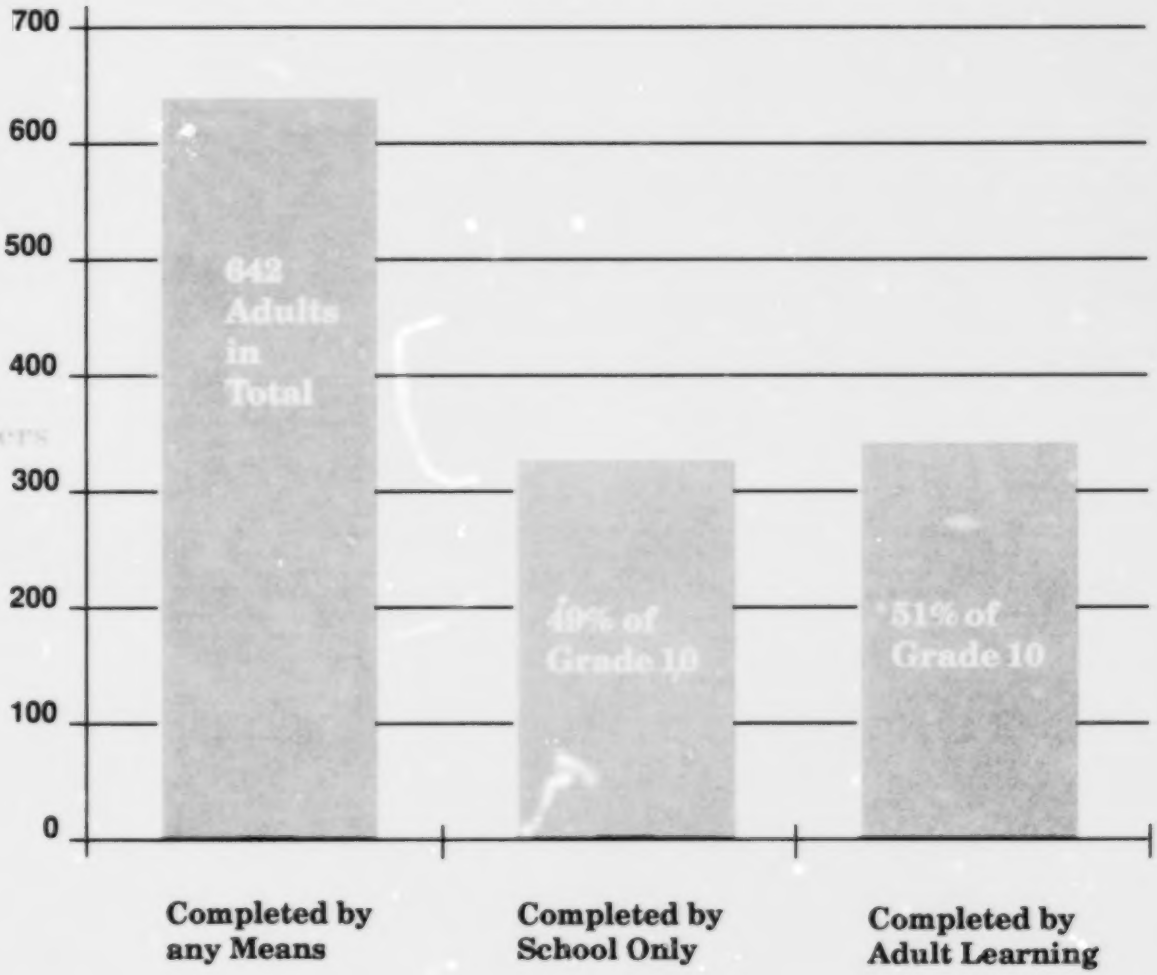
Source: Saskatchewan Education, 1989.

Notes:

Each line traces the enrollment pattern of a single group of students from grade 9 through grade 12. Each group is composed of all the students in the Northern Lights School Division who enrolled in grade 9 in a given year. The three groups which are shown began grade 9 in 1981, 1982, and 1983.

Figure 4

Attainment of Grade 10 Standing by Adults in Databank 1989



Learners

Mode of Learning

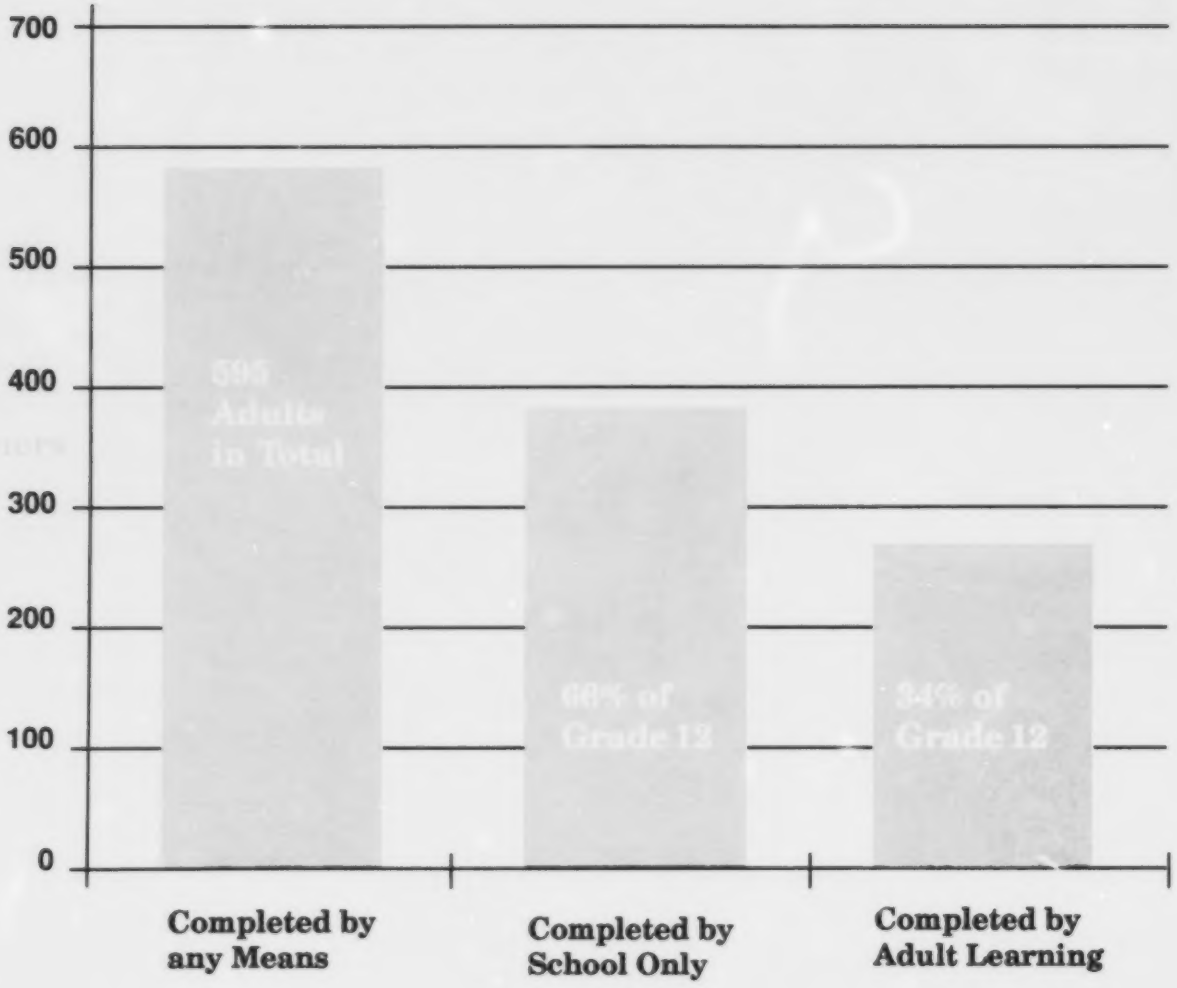
Source: Saskatchewan Education, 1989.

Notes:

The above graph shows the number of adults recorded in the Northern Division's Human Resource Data Bank as of September 1989 who had attained standing in grade 10.

There were 642 northerners who had attained a grade 10 standing by *Any Means*, that is by formal schooling only or by formal schooling followed by Adult Learning such as Adult Basic Education or GED testing. Of these 642 northerners, 314 (or 49%) achieved grade 10 standing by formal schooling only. The remaining 328 (or 51%) achieved their grade 10 standing by some formal schooling followed by Adult Learning.

Figure 5



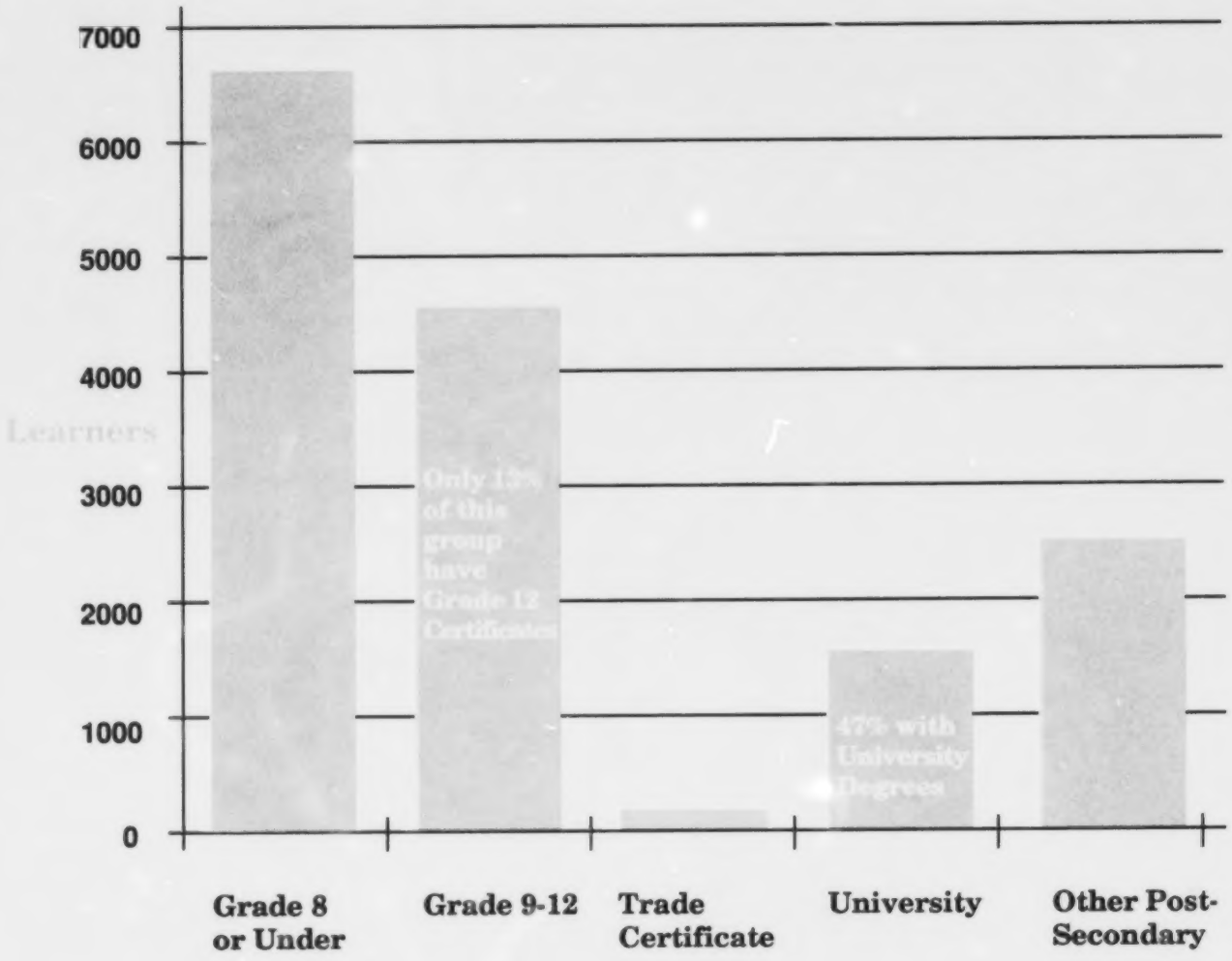
Source: Saskatchewan Education, 1989.

Notes:

The above graph shows the number of adults recorded in the Northern Division's Human Resource Data Bank as of September 1989 who had attained standing in grade 12.

There were 595 northerners who had attained a grade 12 standing by *Any Means*, that is by formal schooling only or by formal schooling followed by Adult Learning such as Adult Basic Education or GED testing. Of these 595 northerners, 390 (or 66%) achieved grade 12 standing by formal schooling only. The remaining 270 (or 34%) achieved their grade 12 standing by some formal schooling followed by Adult Learning.

Figure 6



Source: Saskatchewan Education, 1989.

Notes:

Of the 4,565 northern residents who attempted schooling at the grade 9 to 12 level, only 595 or 13% received a grade 12 certificate. The 1,600 northern residents with a university background include persons who have moved to the North for employment such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, and social workers.

Chapter Two

The Inquiry Process

Issues Presented to the Public for Comment

Comments on the state of northern education were solicited by presenting a set of questions to interest groups, school division authorities, teacher associations, municipal governments, educators, parents, and northerners in general. The issue questions were:

Issue

1. Should pre-kindergarten be available in northern Saskatchewan Schools?
2. What role should native languages play in the school system in northern Saskatchewan?
3. How should parents and the community help students stay in the school system?
4. How should school counselling be made more effective?
5. How can the northern educational system work with employers to help students obtain employment which will be of long-term benefit?
6. Should Northlands Career College offer sponsored Adult Basic Education programs in communities where a grade 10 to 12 program is already being provided by a high school?
7. What assistance can the northern educational system provide for students who have young children?
8. What are some alternatives to the present grade placement and promotion policies of northern schools?
9. How can the different northern educational systems cooperate to achieve the highest possible standards of education?
10. Should SIAST and the provincial universities establish quotas for northern students enabling more northerners to receive post-secondary education?
11. What changes in funding mechanisms are needed to upgrade school recreational facilities such as playgrounds?
12. In what ways can the scheduling of the school year be adapted to the local needs of northern communities?

Schedule of Public Hearings

Responses were solicited at several public hearings in selected northern communities. Hearings were held at the following locations:

Date	Community	Location	Time
Sept. 14, 1988	Stony Rapids	Community Hall	12:00 Noon
Oct. 18, 1988	Cumberland House	School Gym	1:00 p.m.
Oct. 18, 1988	Creighton	Community Hall	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 19, 1988	Pelican Narrows	Hamlet Hall	1:00 p.m.
Nov. 14, 1988	Buffalo Narrows	Friendship Center	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 15, 1988	Beauval	Arena Mezzanine	1:00 p.m.
Nov. 15, 1988	Ile a la Crosse	School Gym	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 16, 1988	La Loche	Town Hall	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 6, 1988	Pinehouse	LCA Hall	1:00 p.m.
Dec. 6, 1988	La Ronge	Pre Cam School Gym	7:00 p.m.

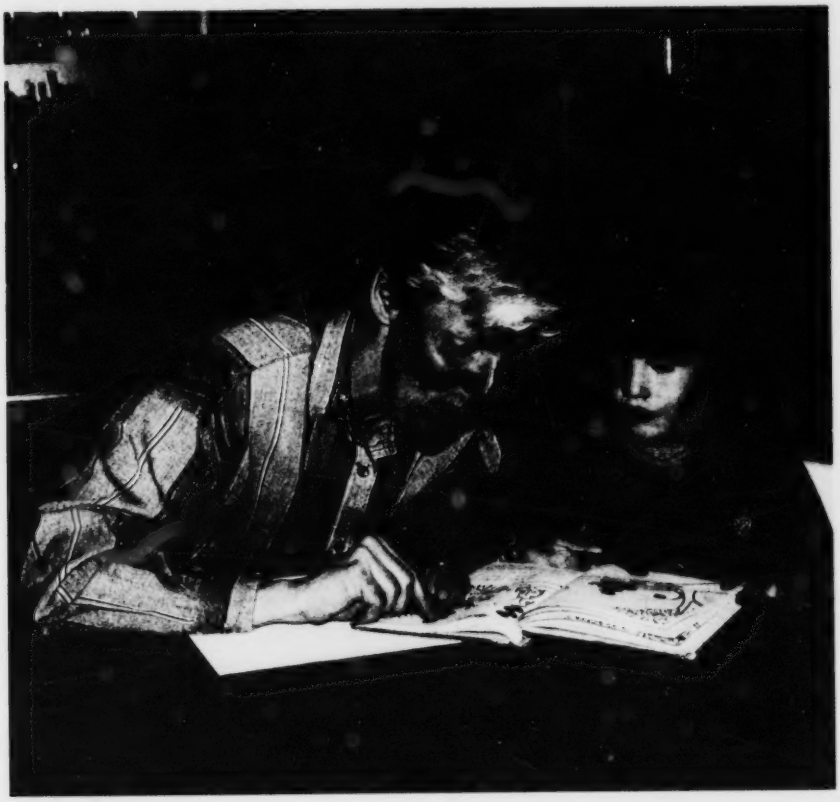
Briefs were presented in both oral and written form. In some instances, briefs directly addressed the issues which had been presented by the Northern Education Task Force. Several briefs added additional issues. In many cases, the briefs addressed issues of particular concern to an individual or group. In certain situations, the identified issues related to the operation of a specific school or a particular program.

An abstract of presentations to the Northern Education Task Force was prepared. This abstract provided the basis for a review of the briefs at a series of meetings attended by members of the Executive Committee of the Task Force. During this process information was supplemented by a review of the relevant literature.

The Executive Committee utilized both sources of information in their formulation of a set of recommendations. These recommendations were then presented to the full Task Force and, subsequently as an Interim Report, to northern education stakeholders for comment and constructive criticism. When those responses were received, the final set of recommendations was formulated by the Northern Education Task Force.

The final preparatory work involved an analysis of statistics relating to the recommendations. Both a full and an executive summary of the submissions was prepared. The full summary together with the abstract of presentations comprise the second part of this report.

The review of literature was refined and provided, where pertinent, background information to each of the recommendations. It should be noted that as much as possible, the (selected) literature was relevant to a northern context. The result is a reflection of northerners' concerns and proposed solutions to the problems confronting northern education as interpreted by the Northern Education Task Force.



Executive Summary of Presentations Made to the Northern Education Task Force

Introduction

A summary of the many responses elicited from northerners during ten community meetings, two radio phone-in broadcasts, and from approximately fifty briefs and submissions must consider several factors.

The diversity of northern Saskatchewan schools and communities emphasized throughout the public consultation is such that consensus on any issue was rarely achieved within a region or community. Agreement, when it was achieved, was most commonly achieved among communities populated predominantly by aboriginal peoples. The "majority opinion" cited here, therefore, recognizes that specific strategies, programs, and resources are required to reflect community differences and to meet the needs of individual communities.

Responses to issues were limited by public awareness of the Task Force mandate and process, location and format of public hearings, number of meeting participants, and the extent and nature of community representation. "Weighing" of responses, in terms of population numbers

represented by a particular position, has not been attempted. Finally, it should be recognized that the magnitude, complexity, and impact of several interrelated issues is sufficient to warrant examination beyond that which can be provided by a summary statement.

Pre-Kindergarten

With the exceptions of Creighton and Cumberland House, where reaction was mixed, northern communities generally indicated that pre-kindergarten programs should be available, but should probably not be compulsory, in northern schools. Anticipated benefits were primarily related to the development of English language skills and the resulting impact upon students' retention in school and enhanced chances for academic and social progress. Specific pilot projects, program methodologies, and in-home readiness alternatives were suggested.

Native Languages

It was generally agreed that native languages should play a role in the northern school system, provided that their use did not detract from the achievement of English language fluency. The appropriate language program and emphasis, therefore, will depend upon the particular needs of each community and its schools.

Program identification and implementation must result from collaborative efforts within the community. Specific program needs and benefits were identified, together with requests from large centers for equal opportunity for French language programs. The Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) indicated that a proposal for a northern languages institute will be forthcoming.

Student Retention

The need to develop a cohesive, functional unit in which parents, teachers, and the community at large would collaboratively work towards improving student retention was indicated. Initiation of parent information, education, and development programs was considered crucial.

The implementation of measures to stimulate parental involvement and to ensure meaningful participatory decision-making and mutual goal-setting was also emphasized. Additional resources were requested to develop and implement long-term school-parent programs. Specific preventative, developmental, and alternate school programs, curricular enrichment options, and community initiatives were also outlined.

Counselling

Well trained, certified counsellors, preferably of native ancestry, speaking a native language, and having an understanding of northern lifestyles and problems, were considered the most essential components of counselling effectiveness. A wide range of proposed counselling programs and services emphasized the need for personal-social development, chemical dependency prevention and intervention, and career education and counselling. A need for additional personnel was indicated.

Employers and the Northern Education System

All four regions indicated the need for financial and human resources to establish long-term, coordinated economic development and training strategies that would comprehensively address the lack of permanent employment in the North. This plan would also serve to prepare a skilled northern workforce with the credentials to readily gain access to available job opportunities.

A wide range of high school programs, most of which included some form of work placement or employer participation, were discussed. Post-secondary programs which would provide opportunities for northern-based trades training, preparation for renewable resource sector employment, and attainment of a broader range of knowledge and skills were recommended. The need for flexible delivery systems and distance education alternatives was also favored as was a distance education pilot project.

Adult Basic Education

The continuation of Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs in all communities and their expansion to grade 11 and 12 levels were highly recommended. However, considerable concern was expressed about training allowances.

Although financial sponsorship is essential for many adults who otherwise would be unable to attend classes, it was felt that this practice tends to encourage participation by incorrectly motivated adults and by K-12 students who perceive ABE as a viable, less difficult, and more profitable alternative. It was recommended, therefore, that safeguards and restrictive measures be implemented to eliminate abuse of the system and to prevent high school students from dropping out of school to enroll in ABE programs.

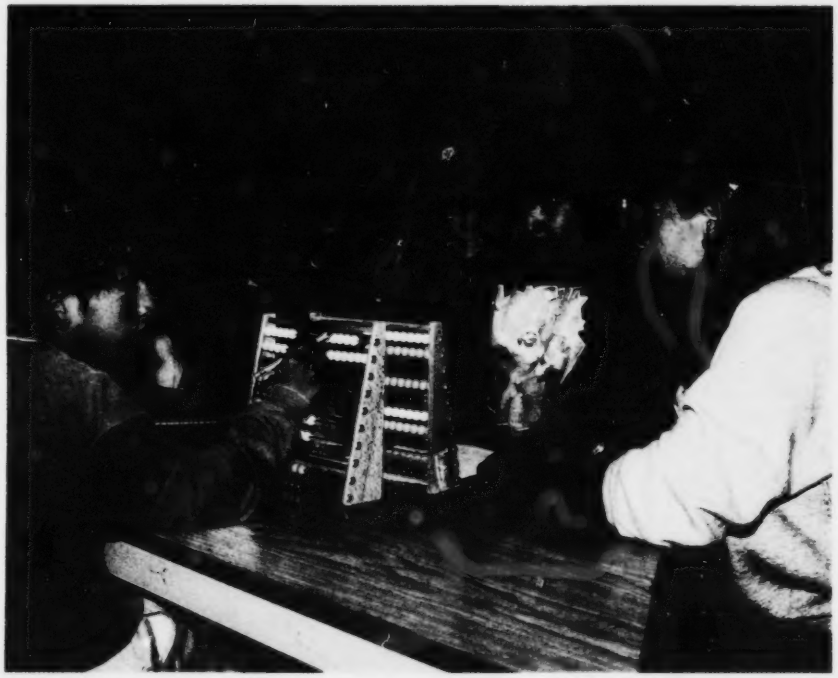
Day Care

The establishment of day care services within educational facilities, the formulation of legislation needed for the provision of day care services to children under the age of 18 months, and the offering of preventative family life education, effective parenting, and health and nutrition programs were highly recommended across regions. A number of other related measures were also outlined.

Grade Placement and Promotion Policy

Although considerable dissatisfaction was expressed with present systems, it was suggested that a review of current practices and a consideration of alternatives be preceded by research to determine factors contributing to severe age-grade deceleration and to standards below the national average. In other cases, critical factors were discussed and a number of specific preventive, remedial, and alternative programs and other measures were proposed.

The ability to implement alternatives and to develop the potential of each child was considered variable with locale and population as well as with financial constraints and workplace demands. In order to provide educational equality and to achieve mainstream standards, the need to lower teacher-pupil ratios was considered essential.



Systems Cooperation

The incorporation of meaningful public participation in the educational decision-making process, a broader mandate for local boards, improved working relationships among boards, and increased board member training were considered critical to effective implementation of change at the community level. The need to establish formal linkages and provide for regularly scheduled meetings and conferences among various educational bodies and groups was identified as well.

It was consistently argued that joint efforts, shared ideas, and combined resources among educational authorities and delivery agents, treaty and non-treaty, were essential. It was pointed out that such efforts would maximize funding, promote uniformity, eliminate duplication, and facilitate efficient use of resources. For similar reasons, increased cooperation and program integration among community agencies where common goals and objectives exist, were suggested.

To achieve these ends, a number of specific alternatives were proposed. To develop uniformity between the K-12 and post-secondary systems, and to enable school leavers to move between systems without gaps or duplication, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) proposed a transition program and laddering process. To improve educational quality, equality, and retention, construction of regional high schools were recommended by people in all regions. A Chemical Dependency Assessment and Treatment Center proposal outlined programs and services to schools and students. Other specific projects of local interest were identified.

Accessibility to Post-Secondary Programs

The majority of community presentations recommended the establishment, by program or type of course, of post-secondary institute quotas for northerners provided that standard prerequisites are maintained. An overall program approach to the provision of more courses in the North was encouraged. Several alternatives, intended to increase both accessibility and retention, were proposed. These included the establishment of a Northern Professional Access College and well equipped regional education centers throughout the North. A re-evaluation of proposed student assistance programs was also requested.

Recreation

A widely expressed opinion indicated the need to achieve uniformity in provincial standards for recreational facilities, playgrounds and related equipment, and recreation programs. Revision of transportation policy, review of funding formulae, and funding increases were requested. Two submissions outlined the potential for coordinated efforts and services among educational systems and sports, culture, and recreation associations. Several options for accomplishing more with limited funds were proposed.

School Year Schedule

Community opinion unanimously agreed that school year scheduling should be determined by individual communities in consultation with parents based upon the needs of the community and educational benefits to their children. Specific alternatives were discussed.

Curricula

In addition to native languages and career education, the most commonly identified need referred to the development of curricula and programs relevant to aboriginal and northern peoples. The reinstatement of the Saskatchewan Education northern curriculum development staff and continued enhancement of the provincial native curriculum development team were recommended. Financial resources for local initiatives and participation of native elders were requested. Other modifications to curricula were specified.

Staffing

The most critical staffing issue, other than teacher-pupil ratios, was concerned with the need for instructors to speak Cree or Dene and to understand northern aboriginal values, lifestyles, and problems. To achieve this end, a number of specific educational programs and incentives were proposed. Widespread support was indicated for NORTEP's move toward the training of native secondary teachers and administrators.

Grant Funding

Frequently reiterated was the need for northern school boards to gain access, through property taxes or grants, to revenue from northern resource industries, Crown properties, and Crown corporations. It was further recommended that the Foundation Grant Formula be examined in relation to the computational mill rate, which is intended as a source of revenue but which actually penalizes the North as a result of property tax collection difficulties. The establishment of criteria and formulae which address northern factors and alleviate capital construction, operation, maintenance, and other problems created by realignment were called for. Revisions to bring per-pupil funding allocations in line with neighboring provinces and to effect other positive changes were proposed.

Specific Concerns and Requests

A number of specific requests, including the need for snack and nutrition programs and Royal Canadian Mounted Police investigation of "drug pushing" in schools, were made. Submissions called for the upgrading of Northlands Career College facilities and their continued development in major centers and outlying communities. Creighton residents requested resolution of several academic and credit-related problems encountered by grade 10 to 12 students who must attend Flin Flon high schools. It was proposed that Kinoosao residents be assisted to gain more effective access to Manitoba education and training systems.

Additional programs, research projects, and educational program delivery alternatives were proposed. Informational submissions were made and issues specific to local situations were discussed. Several briefs are sufficiently comprehensive to warrant independent review.

Conclusion

Reiterated throughout the several meetings and submissions was the need for comprehensive, long-term planning as opposed to a "Band-aid" approach to change. In order to provide equality of educational opportunity and achieve mainstream standards, long-term funding commitments, and revision of grant structures to consider exceptional northern needs and factors were considered essential.

Additionally, one of the proposals called for a grade 1 to 12 study, which would seek local input, consider diversity of communities and schools, and assess needs and establish directions for school programs.

The need for additional financial and human resources and the reinstatement of educational development funds was indicated or implied throughout. It was acknowledged that cost analyses and priority setting for the several proposed innovative programs and approaches would be required, however, any expectation that northern problems could be addressed

without additional funding was considered to be totally unrealistic. For example, the creation of four consultant positions to implement the program-related recommendations made to the Task Force was specifically proposed.

It was suggested that the costs of not improving the northern educational system may be considerably greater in the long run. Increased educational expenditures might be rationalized by anticipated decreases in social services, health, justice, and unemployment benefits costs. Finally, creative approaches and coordinated efforts were considered essential in order to accomplish more with limited resources.

Chapter Three

Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter deals with the recommendations which have been drawn from the reaction by northern Saskatchewan residents to the issues presented. The Task Force used that information to formulate their recommendations. A brief summary of this information is provided. A review of the literature has been undertaken to provide, where possible, research to support the recommendations being made. That information is presented in a northern context. It has been necessary to add several issues which were not included in the original presentation to northern people. These additional issues and subsequent recommendations were included because of the importance attached to them by northerners. In the opinion of Task Force members, they were worthy of inclusion.

Recognized stages of educational progress were utilized as the organizing framework for the development of recommendations. Recommendations are provided for the following stages of educational development:

- Pre-school;
- Elementary;
- Middle Years;
- Secondary; and
- Post-Secondary.

In some instances a recommendation will have an impact on more than one stage of schooling. These are acknowledged where possible. There are several recommendations which have an impact on all aspects of northern education, therefore, they are included under a special heading.

Each recommendation follows a sequence which includes:

1. the recommendation proper;
2. background data and information, set in a northern context, relating to the recommendation;

3. a rationale for the recommendation with supporting relevant research;

4. an implementation plan which proposes specific actions to be taken, agencies to be involved, project timeliness to be set, and relevant pilot projects to be implemented; and

5. an evaluation mechanism to set criteria for determining the extent to which the recommendation has been carried out.

The first four aspects of this format utilized for the presentation of the Northern Education Task Force recommendations are straightforward and require no elaboration. The fifth part of each presentation require explanation since it is a departure from the norm. The Task Force members identified the lack of follow-up on recommendations made in previous studies on northern education as a major concern among northerners. To ensure that this does not occur with respect to the recommendations being made in this report, the process includes the establishment of an Implementation Committee. This committee would be comprised of Task Force members and Saskatchewan Education personnel. It would set criteria for the determination of the extent to which each of the recommendations has been carried out. It would solicit information from agencies responsible for the implementation of each recommendation. It would have considerable influence on northern education by ensuring that the opinions and views of northerners concerning education, as solicited through the efforts of the Northern Education Task Force, are acted upon in realistic ways by the responsible agencies.

General Statement

The Northern Education Task Force believes that to a significant degree, a child's success in the formal education system is greatly influenced by what occurs in that child's life prior to entering school. "Understanding early childhood issues requires knowledge of not only current research theories and practice but also of the history of early childhood and the principles of child development." (*Children Can Wait*, p. 15.) Reaction to the need for additional programming in early childhood education to assist in that developmental process was solicited by the Task Force. The following question was posed: Should pre-kindergarten be available in northern Saskatchewan schools?

Recommendation #1

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education spearhead the development of early childhood education programs for four-year-old children in northern Saskatchewan:

- with emphasis on a home-based model that supports the role of the family; or
- where home-based programs are not feasible, consideration be given to school-based programs.

Response to the Issue

Response by northern residents, with the exception of one community, was in support of the need for some type of early childhood educational programming. Most respondents indicated a need for pre-schooling to assist in the transition from home to school. A majority of respondents suggested that English language programming was necessary to provide a stronger foundation for children who would be entering a school system with an English-based curriculum.

A minority of respondents were in favor of native language programming at this level with English being taught as a second language. This opinion was more common in isolated communities where the native languages remain dominant. The dissenting views were all presented in one community. People in that community felt that any further extension of formal education would be an institutional intrusion into family responsibilities.

Some examples of northerners' reactions to this issue were as follows. "I recommend that the Task Force seriously consider a pre-school program for three and four year olds, with qualified teachers and facilities." (*Minahik Waskahigan School Brief*, p. 2.) "Many southern students have access to early entrance programs which greatly assist in their cognitive development. Evidence from a pilot program in Sandy Bay, as well as numerous other studies, clearly prove that this approach is an effective means of giving students a head start in literacy, and results in more rapid and far reaching achievement." (*Northern Area Teachers' Association Brief*, p. 4.) "Several years ago, we did have a pre-school program and we noticed that, as a result of having attended pre-school, our kindergarten students came to school with an enthusiasm and eagerness that was not evident before the pre-school program." (*Sandy Bay Local School Board Brief*, p. 2.)

Relevant Background Information

Most research suggests that early childhood intervention programs have a positive effect on a child's development and school performance. Most Canadian provinces currently operate programs of this nature under the auspices of the social service departments.

One of the pioneers in this field has been the "Infant Development Programme" in British Columbia. Early Childhood Intervention Programs (ECIP's) in Saskatchewan began during the early 1960's. Utilizing the British Columbia model these ECIP's targeted children who had been identified as having serious developmental delays. These special-needs students were offered a form of home-based intervention with teachers visiting homes and working with both the children and their parents. The only northern example of a similar program is "Children North" which operates out of La Ronge. According to those involved in the program, it has been successful in reaching a number of special needs children and their parents facilitating their entry into the school system.

In-school examples of formal education for four year old children are found in the Indian Band controlled school systems. Almost all of these schools include nursery programs. In some communities, such as Pelican Narrows, they have operated for the past fifteen years. In other band schools, such as those in La Ronge, they have been recently introduced. Educators in the band controlled school systems strongly endorse nursery programs. They suggest that children's future development is enhanced by their early introduction to the school system.

Both social and academic benefits have been cited as positive results of the nursery programs.

In southern Saskatchewan nursery/pre-school programming is offered through private operations, or in the case of French language nursery programming, through non-profit organizations which receive some government financial support. The latter example is a relatively recent development which is designed to assist English speaking students in their eventual enrollment in French language immersion programming. In this respect their target population is similar to northern students in that these children will also be enrolled in schools where the language of instruction is different from the language of the home.

Of the two types of early childhood education programs described in the preceding paragraphs, recent research supports the home-based model as being the more desirable one. "But after nearly two decades of full-time research with children under six years old, Burton White has concluded from his experiments and observations that the family is the primary educational delivery system." (Moore, p. 221.)

Basing their programming on philosophies which approach early childhood education from the family perspective, initiatives such as the "Children North ECIP" attempt to work with parents and children to foster the child's development. These programs send the teacher to the home to work with the child and the parents. "For the child's first seven years or so, the school is at best a substitute and the teacher a surrogate. We should be concentrating wherever possible on educating for parenthood and improving the home ..." (Ibid., p. 222.)

The goals of the "Children North" early childhood intervention program clearly outline their purpose:

- to assist families in identifying realistic goals and in planning comprehensive developmental programs for their children;
- to provide families with educational training and resources in order to further develop those skills which will accomplish the identified goals for their children and family;
- to assist families in the coordination of early childhood and family services;
- to provide opportunities for families to develop mutual support networks within their communities; and
- to provide information to families, and the community at large, on the needs of children who are developmentally delayed, and to promote the community's involvement in providing for those needs.

Although "Children North" is a special needs initiative, it is likely that the same goals could be applied to the general population, particularly in relation to language development, which would be the main purpose of early childhood educational initiatives in northern communities. The abovementioned goals could be altered to meet the needs of the general population by concentrating on the needs of that broader population.

In those situations where home-based schooling is not a feasible alternative, researchers in early childhood education suggest that certain types of pre-schools are the most effective. Institutional pre-schools must exhibit these characteristics:

- warm, responsive, consistent teachers as caregivers;

- small child-adult ratios;
- residential houses instead of school buildings;
- children placed in family-type groups;
- alertness to the frequent need to compensate for language and cultural differences;
- daily homemaking experiences such as gardening, cooking, cleaning;
- programs free from formal teaching;
- adequate nap or rest periods;
- continuity of teacher or caregiver personnel; and
- a sense of parenthood in caregivers. (Ibid., p. 225.)

Probably the most important characteristic of pre-school education relates to the need to create a literacy mind set. The importance of books in a child's life cannot be overemphasized. The more positive experiences a child has with books the greater the likelihood of success in the school system. Young children must become familiar and comfortable with books. This will probably do more than anything else in enhancing their future success in the school system. Despite tremendous change in education the fact remains that success is dependent on reading ability.

Implementation

To implement early childhood education programs the Northern Education Task Force recommends that current Early Childhood Intervention Programs offered by groups such as "Children North" be expanded and supported with necessary financial resources for such expansion. The Department of Social Services is involved and that department should consider increasing its role in this home-based education programming. In instances where home-based programming is not feasible, cooperation among the Department of Social Services, the Department of Education, and the concerned school boards should be pursued to allow for the establishment of institutionalized pre-schools along the lines outlined in the preceding section. "Children North", although a special needs project, can serve as an example of a delivery model of this home-based, early childhood education program.

Social Service officials deal with ECIP's and would appear to be the best available mechanism for extending the delivery of home-based, early childhood education programs. In situations where institutionalized pre-schools are the only alternative, Saskatchewan Education will

have to assume the leadership role. The development of kindergartens in Saskatchewan schools during the 1960's provides a model for the extension of school-based early childhood intervention programs. That model could be implemented to develop pilot pre-school projects at selected schools throughout the North. "If we could begin a program with three and four year olds, by the time these students completed kindergarten they would be more than ready for grade one." (*Minahik Waskahigan School Brief,* p. 1.) The experience of Indian band-controlled schools appears to support that contention. It may be time to extend pre-school programming to northern provincial schools.

Evaluation

The evaluation of this recommendation should be restricted to determining whether or not the implementation of early childhood intervention programs has occurred. That could be the responsibility of the Implementation Committee. An evaluation of the effectiveness of these initiatives must be carried out as well, but that research will be longitudinal, with duration of at least ten years. "... ECE studies have covered relatively short time spans. Appraisals of Head Start and other programs have been inconclusive for this reason." (Moore, p. 232.) Saskatchewan Education should assume responsibility for longitudinal monitoring and research.

General Statement

In Saskatchewan, compulsory formal education begins with grade 1 classes. That level and the next four years of schooling have been identified by Saskatchewan Education as elementary education. Three issues presented for reaction to the public relate specifically to elementary education. Those issues are the following:

- What role should native languages play in the school system in northern Saskatchewan?
- What are some alternatives to the present grade placement and promotion policies of northern schools?
- Should child welfare concerns such as adequate nutrition be addressed by the northern school systems?

A fourth issue emerged from northerners' reactions at the hearings;

- What changes in funding mechanisms are needed to upgrade school recreational facilities such as playgrounds?

Obviously, these issues relate to other levels within the school, but their greatest impact would be at the elementary level.

Recommendation #2

In order that the northern child's self-concept be enhanced and school-community relationships be positively fostered, it is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on native languages within the northern school systems by:

- the offering of native language classes at all levels including credit Cree and Dene language courses at a secondary level;
- the consideration of native language immersion programming at the elementary level in those communities where it is formally requested;
- the development of appropriate materials and curriculum guides for native language programming; and
- the training of northerners who teach native languages.

Response to the Issue

The response to this issue was mixed. Almost all briefs presented to the Northern Education Task Force were in agreement with offering native languages as second language courses at all grade levels. The recent changes under the Core Curriculum make this possible at the kindergarten, elementary, and middle years levels. Cree, Michif, (a combination of Cree and French which is often spoken on the west side of northern Saskatchewan), or Dene classes could be offered as one of the locally determined options. The twenty percent time allocation is more than adequate for the provision of second language programs.

In more isolated communities, the language issue brought out concerns related to the language of instruction. It was generally felt that children's learning would be facilitated if instruction was provided in the child's first language.

The fact that children who spoke Cree or Dene had to deal with teachers who spoke English exclusively was considered detrimental to the children's learning. Two solutions to this problem were suggested. First, the offering of the early grades in the language of the children was proposed. Second, the employment of Cree or Dene speaking teachers or teaching associates in the primary grades was suggested.

In one community the language issue centered on the teaching of French. This issue was also mentioned in a second community. The concerns raised here were related to a perceived need for all students to be fluent in the two official Canadian languages. It must be mentioned that in the community where the concern is greatest, the number of civil servants is a significant proportion of the population. This may, in part, explain the difference in opinion about the use of the native languages in schools between members of that community and other northern residents.

Relevant Background Information

Research into the teaching of second languages or into teaching in a language other than the official language of instruction abounds. In the first instance, commonly held viewpoints on the teaching of the native language can be broken into two broad categories. One argument suggests that the teaching of a heritage language such as Cree or Dene weakens the ability of students to learn English. It is suggested that the teaching of two languages tends to confuse the child. A second argument centers on the integration of the native child into Canadian society. Proponents of English-only teaching claim that this facilitates the child's entrance into the larger society. "In actuality, we know that learning a second language takes years; and we know that over time students who are bilingual or even trilingual do academically as

well, if not better, than monolingual students; further, if students are having difficulties learning a second language, chances are that the problem lies in their conceptual and linguistic abilities in the native language." (Basman, p. 59.)

In fact, research indicates that English-as-a-second-language programming and the teaching of heritage native languages have similar goals. First, advocates of both approaches cite the achievement of the child's linguistic and academic potential within the school system as their primary objective.

"Their very concern with language - the medium of thought - makes these programs particularly useful in trying to bridge the gap between conceptual ability and unfamiliarity in English." (Basman, p. 60.) Both approaches, if they utilize similar teaching strategies, should enhance the child's academic achievement.

A second goal of any effective school system is to enhance the child's self-concept. One's feelings of self-worth are substantially based on an understanding of and respect for one's cultural background. Language is an integral part of that cultural background. Whether that language is Cree, Michif, or Dene, it must be recognized as a legitimate form of communication in the child's mind. That legitimization can, at least partially, come from the school system. A school system which offers the native language of the cultural groups it serves provides a considerable amount of positive support to the self-concept of the child within that school system.

And third, the transition from home to school should be as smooth as possible to facilitate the successful entry of the child into the school system. The offering of a native language, particularly in the early years, can assist in that transitional process. Children who communicate with family and others in their community in a native language will feel more at ease in the school if that language is used in the school. Theoretically, a school which offers all programming in the native language of the children during the kindergarten and primary years should increase the likelihood of the children's successful transition from home to school. Schools which follow this practice offer English as a second language, gradually increasing the emphasis on English instruction as the children progress through the grades.

"Perhaps the most important way in which Heritage Language and English as a Second Language can work together is in promoting communication between home and school, since school only has meaning to a community insofar as it is perceived and understood by the community. Otherwise it is simply an

unconnected institution." (Basman, p. 61.) The school must attempt to bridge the communication gap between home and school. One of the specific measures which can be taken to narrow that communication gap is to have the school offer a native language.

The offering of a native language generally enhances the school's reputation within the community. It also guarantees the employment of one or more teachers who speak the native language of the parents and the teachers often provide an important communication link between the school and community.

The decision as to whether the native language is to be offered as a second language in the school or whether it becomes the language of instruction in the primary grades is dependent on the nature of the community and the desires of the parents. The incidence of use of native languages in northern Saskatchewan communities varies considerably. In many instances the native language is no longer a viable means of communication. English usage in the communities is often in the form of dialectal English. "English-as-a-second-dialect students are those whose dialect of English is sufficiently different from that used by the school system so as to restrict their progress." (British Columbia, Ministry of Education, *English as a Second Language/Dialect Resource Book for K-12,* p. 3.) The teaching methodology used to deal with this problem differs from strategies designed for English as second language speakers. In these situations the native language can only be taught as a second language. In those communities, where Cree or Dene has been retained as the language of daily communication, it may be feasible to use the native language as the language of instruction in the primary grades.

Both the teaching of native languages and instruction in the native language at the primary level have been carried out in northern Saskatchewan schools. "The Northern Lights School Division has encouraged the provision of Cree Language Programs in schools where parents have requested them. Presently, programs are offered in a number of schools. Some assistance for program implementation was received from the Education Development Fund." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 27.) The Northern Lights School Division presently employs a Cree language-culture consultant and hopes to fill a vacant Dene language consultant position. "The Board believes that it is essential that a similar position be re-established at the earliest possible date." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 27.)

The only northern Saskatchewan school system to provide instruction in a native language is the Lac La Ronge Indian Band School System which is based on a bilingual/bicultural philosophy. The Band provides programming in both Cree and English with the objective that each child will develop oral fluency and literacy in both languages. "Each child is provided with a program which is designed to continue development in his/her first language while expanding his/her second language." (Lac La Ronge Indian Band Curriculum Resource Unit, *Integrated Curriculum Guide,* p. 15.) There are several prerequisites to the implementation of this type of programming:

- certified Cree speaking teachers;
- parental and community support; and
- curriculum materials in the native language.

"Presently all schools offer initial literacy in English once students have a strong foundation in English. Cree literacy is introduced only after the students can read and write English fairly well." (Ibid., p. 15.)

Both provincially and nationally there appears to be a renewed emphasis on language immersion and the teaching of heritage native language programs. "There are well-established heritage language (bilingual) programs in the regular school day in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. While these programs are not numerically large, the model of education they present is an achievement and inspires emulation." (Multiculturism Canada, *Education: Cultural and Linguistic Pluralism in Canada,* p. 62.) Approximately 1000 children participate in heritage language programs in Ontario. "Lastly, the teaching of native languages has developed in this period. Curriculum materials and readers have been created in the Northwest Territories in [the dialects of] Inuktitut, Chipewyan, Slavey, Loucheux, and Dogrib. In the Yukon, instruction is given in Tlingt, Loucheux, Southern Tutchone, Northern Tutchone, Han, and Kaska. In the provinces, increasing attention has been given to the language and culture of native people." (Ibid., p. 63.)

This interest in native language preservation is also evident in northern Saskatchewan. "The present moment is highly critical for the Indian languages, Cree and Dene; the negative impact of modern media, especially television, on native language fluency has become quite marked amongst children entering school." (*NORTEP Brief,* p. 9.) This brief goes on to suggest that the promotion of all aspects of Indian language education is urgently required. Included in this process would be oral language development, orthographies, the collection of literature, and the preparation of Indian language materials. "NORTEP, therefore, is proposing to seek funding for a 'Northern Language Institute' in the near future..." (Ibid., p. 9.)

Implementation Plan

The implementation of native language programs has been started in northern Saskatchewan schools. The offering of native languages at the primary and middle years levels is established in many northern communities. Native language consultants have been hired or are soon to be employed by the school systems. Their main purpose is to facilitate native language programs. The provision of credit native language classes at the grade 10 to 12 level is not widespread, but some schools such as Keethanow School at Stanley Mission do offer credit classes in Cree. Other high schools in northern Saskatchewan could be encouraged to follow this example.

Teachers will require considerable support in order to implement this recommendation. Their involvement in all aspects of the implementation process must be assured. School division administrative and consultative staff must be cognizant of this and work towards insuring that this involvement actually takes place. Support must also be forthcoming in terms of program guidelines and relevant materials. The need for a northern languages institute to provide that support is obvious. The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Languages has been established to provide assistance to treaty Indian schools and teachers, but no comparable provincial initiative exists. The recommendation contained in the NORTEP brief concerning the development of a "Native Language Institute" for northern Saskatchewan would have to be implemented to make the offering of native languages in northern schools a viable alternative.

Saskatchewan Education has indicated that, under the 20 percent locally determined options aspect of the new Core Curriculum, it is possible to facilitate the approval of credit language courses at the grade 10 to 12 level. Revised university entrance requirements for a second language add to the importance of these proposed developments.

The instruction of native language programs is a much more difficult measure to introduce. The Lac La Ronge Indian Band has experienced problems with this approach for several reasons. "Some communities did consider the option of Cree literacy first, but opted to begin with English literacy for a variety of reasons. There is the need for more trained teachers in the 'th' dialect as well there are insufficient materials written in the 'th' dialect. As well, parents want their children to learn English so that they can transfer into English medium schools with little trouble." (Lac La Ronge Indian Band, *Integrated Curriculum Guide,* p. 15.) The band's experience with Cree language instruction should provide a model for any subsequent implementation of native language immersion programs. This is not to suggest that native language instruction in the primary grades is not feasible, but rather that it should only be implemented after careful study, thorough consultation with the community and educational authorities, and with the assurance that qualified teachers and adequate materials are available.

Evaluation

The evaluation mechanism for determining the extent to which native language programming has been implemented is inherent in the structure of the Implementation Committee. Reports from representatives of the various educational authorities in northern Saskatchewan should be requested and received by the Implementation Committee. Included in those reports should be a quantitative and qualitative assessment of native language programs.

Recommendation #3

In order to enhance student progress in northern Saskatchewan schools, it is recommended that Saskatchewan Education implement a number of initiatives. Those initiatives should include the following:

- the implementation of a continuous progress policy at the elementary level;
- the adaptation and implementation of a curriculum for northern Saskatchewan which recognizes the unique aspects of northern education;
- the re-affirmation of the importance of the development of a positive self-concept based on the cultural, linguistic, and historical contributions made by the people of northern Saskatchewan;
- the in-depth examination of current language arts pedagogy;
- the development or procurement of testing and evaluation materials which are unbiased and reflect present understanding of literacy learning; and
- the establishment of provincially-accepted standards for northern education.

Response to the Issue

The responses to this issue were varied. Suggestions for change ranged from strict adherence to the lock-step, pass-fail, grade system of the past to a continuous progress system based on skill checklists. "We don't like the grade system of level 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, etc., Alternate-Vocational Individual Development (AVID), and vocational classes because it takes too many years for students to finish. We should have straight grades and students should complete one grade in one year." (*Some Concerned Parents of Pinehouse Brief,* p. 1.) The other point of view was expressed in the following manner. "The obvious solution would be a continuous progress system. Such a system works best in larger urban schools where populations permit the grouping of children of approximately equal development. In our schools, such convenient

grouping is impossible." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 12.) The dilemma identified here was best summarized in the following presentation. "If you talk with a child psychologist, you would in all likelihood receive a negative answer to having grades and promotions in the schools. They believe that students should go at their own speed through the system without the use of grades, etc. If you talk to any personnel officer in industry, the first thing they want to know is do you have a graduation certificate and what were your marks in fields such as the sciences, mathematics, etc." (*Ile a la Crosse School Board Brief,* p. 2.)

Suggested solutions to the problem of students' progress through the educational system were just as varied. The brief presented by the Northern Village of Beauval suggested a series of possible solutions:

- lower pupil-teacher ratios;
- employment of specialists;
- larger regional schools; and
- compensation to overcome population and distance factors.

"The general solution lies in the creation of an education system that is unique to Northern Saskatchewan and therefore responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people of the North." (*Gabriel Dumont Institute Brief,* p. 4.) At the Creighton hearings presenters stressed the need for common standards throughout the North. Almost all briefs emphasized the need for lower pupil-teacher ratios, especially at the primary level. The Northern Area Teachers' Association (NATA) stated this concern very specifically. "We recommend that the actual teacher-pupil ratios be no more than 1:15 in cases where English is a second language and/or where the age-grade discrepancy of most students is one or more years." (*Northern Area Teachers' Association Brief,* p. 4.)

Other suggestions for enhancing student progress included the following:

- the need for native-language-speaking teachers at the primary level;
- the development of relevant curriculum materials;
- research into current early childhood pedagogy; and
- the problem of accurately assessing student progress according to provincial or national norms.

The question of standards continues to perplex many northerners. This concern centers on the wish that their children receive a quality education, but the definition of quality education is often based on a perceived southern standard of educational achievement. An additional suggestion, the development of alternate programs, was offered as a means of enhancing student progress.

Relevant Background Information

Northern school systems have spent considerable time, money, and effort on attempting to solve this problem. One aspect of this issue centers on the northern adults' perceptions of education. For example, many parents refer to the time they spent as students in school.

They may feel that northern schools do not now meet the expectations they had during their own school years, often spent in southern, residential settings. As well, there is sometimes a lack of understanding on how education has changed over the years. The fact that many southern school systems actively foster the notion of superior standards by placing students in a lower grade when they transfer from the North creates this attitude of inferior standards. But the contention that student progress in northern schools is not as favorable as it should be is supported by concrete data.

"As was noted in a previous table, a relatively low percentage of the student population is at the Division IV level. It is believed that an attainable objective is to increase this proportion to the provincial average within the next seven years. The division has long recognized the problem of age-grade discrepancy, dropout rates and general lack of student success. It has been an on-going priority to identify the causes of these problems and to develop solutions to address them." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 28.)

A detailed analysis of the achievement status of students in grades 1, 4, and 7 was carried out by the Creighton School Division in 1987. The Canadian Tests of Basic Skills were administered. Conclusions derived from the achievement testing program indicated that Creighton students achieved results comparable to the national norms. But it also found a widening gap between local student achievement and the national norms as students progressed through the higher grade levels. Thus one finds the problem of dropouts in northern school systems concentrated in grades 8, 9, and 10 as students begin to experience increasing academic difficulties with the subject matter presented at that level.

The dilemma shown to exist at Creighton is similar to others exhibited throughout northern schools in that preliminary research delineates the problem but is too tentative to determine cause. Longitudinal research would appear to be essential if this and other concerns in northern education are to be addressed.

The Northern Lights School Division and other school systems in northern Saskatchewan have introduced a number of programs designed to overcome the dropout problem. Grants have been made available to address the issue of age-grade discrepancy, student motivation, and cultural relevance. Northern Education Opportunities Grants (NEOGs) were available from 1979 to 1984. "The purpose of NEOG was to improve basic and auxiliary skills, enhance pride, self respect and independence, reduce drop out rate, promote an appreciation of the native language, promote northern vocational education and to initiate educational intervention for students who have shown a low level of educational achievement as indicated by their age-

grade placement." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 26.) Provincial school systems introduced a number of programs under NEOG including: resource rooms, readiness language development, technical education, and career education. Unfortunately, NEOG has been phased out.

The Northern Education Opportunities Grants are a prime example of what has happened in northern education. Problems are identified by students, parents, educators, and task forces. Programs are designed to provide solutions to identified problems and funding is allocated. But attempts at solutions are most often short-term in nature with little or no long term planning and research. As a result, it is the opinion of this Task Force that a detailed strategy based on solid research and long-term planning and funding is necessary. Such a plan must include measures to combat problems experienced by northern students in southern-oriented school systems. Although northern school systems have spent considerable time and effort on attempting to solve the above problems, it should be noted that they are not problems restricted to northern Saskatchewan. The Sullivan Royal Commission on Education in British Columbia pointed out that approximately one third of B.C. students drop out of school before graduation. (*A Legacy for Learners*, 1988). The Sullivan Royal Commission made over eighty recommendations. Included in those recommendations were a number directly related to student progress. In responding to those particular recommendations the British Columbia Minister of Education called for school divisions to implement an ungraded primary program. "With the new provincial curriculum the first four years of school will consist of an ungraded primary program." (*A Response to the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education by the Government of British Columbia,* p. 12.)

To ensure that all students achieve a solid grounding in the basic literacy and numeracy skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and computing, the B.C. Ministry of Education has recommended the following initiatives. First, the introduction of a dual entry system at the kindergarten level. Second, the assessment of the individual child's development needs at the end of the first year with appropriate program adjustments being made. Third, full day kindergarten programs may be provided for Indian, English-as-a-Second-Language (E.S.L.), and special needs children. Fourth, the development of a new integrated primary curriculum will be undertaken. Fifth, new teaching and learning materials will be developed.

Support for this British Columbia initiative is quite widespread. "Retention of students is still a common practice of some school districts despite research that proves the practice to be ineffective." (*"Promotion vs Retention: What are the Implications for Policy Development"*, p. 1.) Hall and Wallace, in this article, suggest that about fifty studies on retention support the following generalizations:

Repeating a grade does not:

- necessarily increase a slow rate of learning;
- make for better student morale;
- ensure mastery of the subject matter;
- increase the child's personality adjustment; and
- enhance a child's motivation. (Ibid., pp. 1-2.)

A continuous-progress system is not a new idea. For many of the reasons stated above, Saskatchewan Education implemented a program of continuous progress similar to the British Columbia initiative during the 1970's. There is some doubt that this program was actually implemented in northern Saskatchewan. As a result, northern students have experienced failure to a much greater extent than their southern counterparts. Northerners do not generally believe that the lock-step, grade system is of benefit to their children. In many situations an already battered self-concept is often subjected to further degradation. The results have not been positive.

Implementation Plan

The Northern Education Task Force members believe the implementation of a continuous progress policy to be only a first step. Accompanying that policy must be initiatives in curriculum development which recognize the unique set of northern factors and the cultural, linguistic, and historical contributions of northerners. It is felt that these measures would also contribute to the enhancement of the children's self concepts.

The implementation of current holistic language arts theory and practice would enhance language and literacy among northern students. Saskatchewan Education is currently in the initial stages of implementing a holistic language arts curriculum.

This theory is based on the premise that language is best learned naturally through activities such as high-quality children's literature being read to and by students, process writing, and language experience techniques. These activities have the potential of increasing language appreciation as well as recognizing the validity of the children's background experiences at home, in the community, and within their culture.

This approach provides a more flexible framework for enhancing the self-concept of students by recognizing varied achievement levels within the classroom. A continuous progress system is supported as students learn content and skills through their own experiences rather than through externally referenced learning materials. Teachers can then select and adapt learning materials to meet the needs of their students rather than forcing them to adapt to materials that may be foreign to their experiences.

Teachers will also need to be supported through professional development initiatives to familiarize them with current language arts pedagogy. As well, student learning difficulties must be accurately identified through the use of unbiased testing and evaluation devices. That identification should then allow knowledgeable teachers to address those problems with relevant curricula and support materials. The process should also insure the achievement of acceptable, provincially-recognized standards.

The implementation of this recommendation will require a concerted effort by all who are involved in northern education. Saskatchewan Education will have a major leadership role in research into and planning of new program initiatives. Adequate funding and resource personnel will have to be provided to ensure that identified measures are implemented. The various school division boards must be willing to initiate pilot projects designed to correct some of the problems that have been identified. Under a program such as NEOG, funding should be provided to enable school boards to carry out these pilot projects. Educators should be encouraged to adapt and implement new initiatives in their schools. Changes to traditional ways of offering classes may be necessary. The Northern Area Teachers' Association will play a leadership role in gaining teacher acceptance of new program initiatives. Parents should play an active role in both planning and implementation. Local school boards and parent-teacher associations could be the vehicles for gaining involvement and input. Funding is often most effective if allocated at the local level through procedures such as those developed for the Education Development Fund.

Evaluation

An evaluation mechanism should be developed as part of the research component. Data on student achievement and rates of progress must be collected at the beginning of any new program and at different stages during its implementation. In some instances, longitudinal research over a period of ten to fifteen years will be necessary. Saskatchewan Education and northern school division administration offices must assume the responsibility for establishing and monitoring the evaluation process. Regular reports, based on the research data, can then be provided to the Implementation Committee.

Recommendation #4

It is recommended that a school nutrition program, based on the Saskatchewan Education Community School model, be implemented in northern schools.

Response to the Issue

Child welfare concerns have always had an effect on the performance of students. Many of these concerns were presented to the Northern Education Task Force. "We as educators used to teach the *3 R's*. Now teachers must deal with a host of social and health issues. These must be addressed before teachers are able to teach." (*R. Johnston Brief,* p. 2.) One of the major social and health concerns relates to alcohol and drug abuse among students. This concern is addressed in the section on the need for increased counselling services. A second concern heard by the Task Force focussed on nutrition. "Some students in some communities come to school hungry. These children cannot learn at the rate we would like them to, if they are hungry." (*Northern Area Teachers' Association Brief,* p. 5.)

Relevant Background Information

Hunger is not restricted to northern Saskatchewan. Graham Riches from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina cited some startling figures at the 1989 AWASIS conference. "In Canada, one in six children is growing up without enough food ...." (*Prince Albert Herald,* "One Child in Four Hungry in Province", March 10, 1989) Mr. Riches, in his address, pointed out that in Saskatchewan, one child in four is going hungry. "It is not just a social issue ... it is becoming an issue for the education system. Hungry children in school cannot learn properly." (Ibid.) It would be accurate, based on the incidence of social assistance payments to northern residents, to suggest that the magnitude of the problem in northern Saskatchewan is at least equal to that in the province as a whole. Northern educators, social workers, nurses, and school board members all agree that this is a very serious problem in many northern communities.

Educational authorities have recognized hunger as a problem in southern, urban schools. A major component of the Community Schools Program allows designated schools in urban centers to hire a nutritionist and to provide a nutrition program for the students. "It is obvious that many northern communities could be easily classed as community schools and that breakfast programs would greatly benefit the academic and social/physical development of many northern children." (*Northern Area Teachers' Association Brief,* p. 5.)

To qualify as community schools in southern Saskatchewan the following criteria must be met. Schools must be located in lower socio-economic areas of the cities and their populations must be at least 20 percent native. The goals of community schools can be summarized as follows:

- community use of facilities;
- community involvement in the regular school and classroom programs;
- community-based adult education programs;
- additional programs for children and youth;
- community development;
- coordination of social services; and
- representative community school councils.

Of particular relevance to the issue under discussion are the goals of coordination of social services and additional programs for children and youth. "This component can work together with community residents to identify problems and bring their resources together to resolve these problems." (SERD Consultants Ltd., *Community Schools Roles and Goals,* p. 9.) The programs for children and youth may include "... lunch and nutritional programs." (Ibid., p. 8.) "The data strongly suggest that the School Nutrition Program is a significant aspect of the Community Schools Program, and that the majority of people involved perceive a great deal of benefit from the Nutrition Program." (Department of Northern Saskatchewan, *Evaluation of the Community Schools Program: Executive Summary,* p.16.)

The evaluation carried out by the Educational Research Institute of British Columbia recommended the continuation of the community schools nutrition program. "The Department should consider developing a set of criteria for appropriate implementation of the Nutrition Program, and in cases where communities can document a need according to the criteria, should consider extending the Nutrition Program to those schools." (Ibid., p. 17.)

The 1984 evaluation study also suggested that the goal relating to the coordination of social services was one worthy of continuation. "Therefore, it is recommended that efforts be made by community school coordinators to strengthen ties with various social service agencies, not only in relation to individual cases, but also in terms of program development and coordination." (Ibid., p. 21.)

At least one Saskatchewan community school has taken that step. At Queen Mary school in Prince Albert, a program was developed to help students who were experiencing social problems which affected their learning. "Since then, Christopherson [school employed social worker] has seen children whose learning abilities have been interfered with by family alcoholism, problems of poverty, such as lack of food, and poor classroom behaviour which began at home." ("School Social Worker Tackles Tough Ones", *Prince Albert Herald,* March 11, 1989) Ms. Christopherson claims it is an advantage to be working out of a school. "Being in a school environment, instead of working out of a government agency definitely helps the children to learn to trust her ..." (Ibid.)

Implementation Plan

The Northern Education Task Force believes that situations in most northern communities are similar to the ones being addressed by urban community schools. The home-school liaison component of the community schools program is discussed under the recommendations on counselling services. The nutrition program aspect has not been directly addressed, therefore, the Task Force believes it important to consider the implementation of a program of that nature in northern schools. Utilizing the model developed in the community schools program, it should be possible to extend nutrition programs to northern schools.

Funding for such a program should be possible through the creative utilization of existing funds. Labor for the provision of nutrition programs could be supplied by northerners who are presently unemployed or through parental volunteer efforts. The help of junior and senior high school students could also be enlisted. Food costs may be borne by Saskatchewan Education if the Community Schools model is adopted. All feasible alternatives should be explored.

Evaluation

In its evaluation, the Implementation Committee will have to consider two separate aspects of this program. First, an assessment of Saskatchewan Education's willingness to extend the nutrition program presently in place for southern, urban, community schools to northern locations will have to be undertaken.

A part of this evaluation will have to be an examination of funding sources and mechanisms. Second, the Implementation Committee would make a determination of the extent to which northern school divisions have actually implemented any program. Obviously, the first aspect must precede any implementation process.

Recommendation #5

It is recommended that appropriate criteria, based on northern factors, be developed for common, northern-wide standards for school and community recreational facilities and programming. It is further recommended that in those communities where minimal standards are not met, adequate funding be provided to upgrade existing facilities or to construct new ones.

Response to the Issue

Responses to this issue centered on two major concerns: **facilities** and **programming**. The emphasis in most presentations was on the latter. With respect to facilities, most briefs concentrated on playgrounds and equipment and, in one case, on the need for an adequate gymnasium. The difficulties inherent in developing adequate playgrounds on the muskeg and pre-cambrian shield common to the North were highlighted with a suggestion that special financial recognition be granted. The cost of replacing equipment was also emphatically cited as a major concern for most northern schools. The fact that Dene High School at La Loche has an enrollment of over 300 students, but no gymnasium, was cited as a major problem. "DNS (Department of Northern Saskatchewan) built schools in phases - classrooms and core area followed by gymnasia and playground development. The Department of Education approves a complete project for funding." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 4.) The result has been incomplete playground development and, in the case of Dene High School, the lack of a gymnasium, since these projects do not receive a high priority under Saskatchewan Education criteria.

Most of the reaction was concerned with recreational programming for northern students. According to a survey funded by the Education Development Fund, "... most respondents stated funding, transportation, accommodation and expertise as their greatest concerns." (*The Needs of Northern Schools in Cultural and Sporting Activities,* p. 1.) The following recommendations were based on responses from all provincial schools throughout the North. They provide a good synopsis of concerns presented to the Northern Education Task Force.

The survey results suggested that:

- The Northern Lights School Division develop and operate a cultural and sporting program in conjunction with regional recreation associations on a regional and northern level. (regional - being reasonably close together, and northern - being schools within the Northern Lights School Division)

- The development of a regional and northern program in cultural and sporting events should occur and expand during a five year developmental program.

- The Northern Lights School Division employ a Cultural and Sporting Consultant to administer a Cultural and Sporting Program. (With or without the involvement of regional recreation associations.) This consultant would also provide physical education inservice programs.

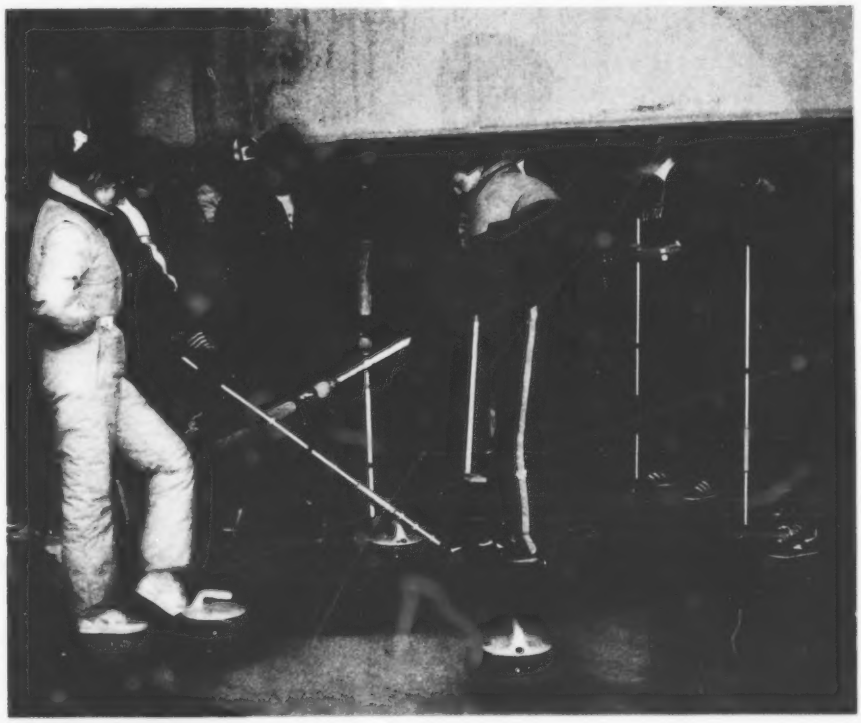
- The Northern Lights School Division undertake a financial study to determine the costs of a Cultural and Sporting program and determine a cost sharing plan among the central office of the Northern Lights School Division, schools in the Northern Lights School Division and Regional Recreation Associations in the North.

- The Northern Lights School Division should request an inservice program from the Regional Recreation Coordinating Committee, (representative of the five Regional Recreation Associations) before proceeding with cultural and sporting programs on their own. (Ibid., p. 3.)

Relevant Background Information

Recreational facilities and programming have been a major concern of northerners for many years. The northern situation differs from the southern scene in that much recreational activity centers on the school. With the exception of community-organized softball, hockey, and, in some instances curling, there are very few other organized recreational activities. During the 1970's, the federal and provincial governments expended considerable amounts of money on making the schools the center of community recreational activity. Large community gymnasia were constructed in several northern settlements. These gymnasia were built on the premise that they would be available for the use of the entire community.

As well, playground development was to be extensive, with the creation of adventure playgrounds, tracks, and adequate playing fields. These initiatives were designed to at least partially compensate for the lack of private or community-owned facilities. Unfortunately, these projects were not always completed leaving many communities with substandard or nonexistent recreational facilities.



Steps have been taken within and outside the schools to further develop recreational programming in northern communities. The Northern Recreation Coordinating Committee has

become active, as part of an overall provincial thrust, in providing an equivalent standard of recreational activity for northern people. Based on a belief that recreation can contribute significantly to the well-being of the individual and subsequently to the well-being of the community, the Northern Recreation Coordinating Committee is promoting increased cooperation with other agencies involved in the community. "... We believe that there is great potential for the education system that exists in northern Saskatchewan ... to cooperate and coordinate efforts towards planning of programs and services in conjunction with the existing sport, culture and recreation system to meet common goals at the community level ..." (*Northern Recreation Coordinating Committee Brief,* p. 3.) The Northern Education Task Force, based on northerners' responses, support the contention that "... the Department of Education develop high standards for the construction of playgrounds and playing fields as a bare minimum for inclusion in any school development project." (Ibid., p. 4.)

Implementation Plan

The implementation of this recommendation will be dependent on the reaction of Saskatchewan Education since it will require an adjustment of present facilities construction criteria. "The Facilities and School Grants branches of the Department of Education have recognized these problems and have been most cooperative in making adjustments or giving consideration outside the regular process. However, these differences need to be recognized and the processes need to be formalized." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 4.) This statement by the Northern Lights School Division summarizes very well the action required to make this recommendation a reality. In fact, the board has very recently budgeted a significant amount of money towards the programming aspect of a recreational and cultural initiative.

Recognizing that facilities only represent one part of the need in this area, the Northern Lights School Division has responded with the funding necessary to initiate considerable recreation and cultural activity within the school system.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the implementation of this recommendation should be straightforward. The question will be, "Have the criteria been altered to allow northern schools to upgrade their existing recreational facilities including playgrounds and gymnasia to acceptable standards?" Reaction to this recommendation should be forthcoming from the Saskatchewan Education officials who will be represented on the Implementation Committee.

General Statement

Saskatchewan Education recently categorized grade levels 6, 7, 8, and 9 into a new structure called the "Middle Years". The Northern Education Task Force considered the following issues to be of particular significance to students in the Middle Years:

- How should parents and the community help students stay in the school system? and
- In what ways can the scheduling of the school year be adapted to the local needs of northern communities?

The Middle Years are often the critical time in a student's life. If a student is going to drop out, that intention is usually formalized during adolescence. Thus, the two issues cited above relate to ways of maximizing student retention rates. The Middle Years offer the greatest challenge in that respect.

Recommendation #6

It is recommended that parents should be encouraged to become more involved in the school system as a means of ensuring that their children remain in school. To increase parental involvement a greater emphasis should be placed on public education and awareness, school and community contact, and local participation in the educational decision-making process by such measures as:

- the implementation of a public awareness program by northern educational jurisdictions which would involve the use of the media, public meetings, and other appropriate vehicles;
- the training and employment of qualified guidance counsellors whose responsibilities would include home-school liaison; and
- continued emphasis on the training and development of local school boards to facilitate their involvement in the educational decision-making process.

Response to the Issue

Several briefs and oral presentations to the Northern Education Task Force highlighted this issue as a major concern. The La Loche Dene High School Brief suggested that, "Parent involvement in the schools is imperative if education is to move ahead in the future. The more the parents understand about the school the more likely they will support it and encourage their children to remain in school." (*Dene High School Brief,* p. 2.) According to the La Ronge Concerned Parents Group, "Northern Lights and Saskatchewan Education must somehow bring about some team work between teachers, counsellors, and parents to work towards the common goals of retaining students." (*Concerned Parents Group Brief,* p. 6.) "Likewise, local School Boards, and elected leaders in northern communities should promote the importance of education to the residents of the northern communities." (*Fond du Lac Indian Band Brief,*p.2.)

A number of suggestions were made to increase parental involvement. It was generally felt that parents need to be educated about the operation of the school system and for them to understand the importance of education for their children. Briefs stated that this could be done by implementing public relations campaigns using such media as local television, radio, newspapers, and newsletters. Another measure for improving parental involvement would be to increase local involvement in the decision-making process, according to briefs presented at La Ronge, Pelican Narrows, and Pinehouse.

Meaningful involvement would increase communication between parents and the school thereby improving understanding of and support for the school system. The third mechanism for increased parental-school contact centered on home-school liaison workers. It was suggested that greater knowledge and understanding on both sides would be accomplished by establishing such a program.

Relevant Background Information

"We assume today that every normal child should complete high school. Thus when we see that 88 percent of all Canadian children, but only six percent of Indian children complete high school, we assume that there is a problem in Indian society which needs to be corrected. A more humanistic perspective would be to judge success individually and in the context of the culture that particular individuals live in." (Price, p. 264.)

Before suggesting measures to improve student retention in the northern school systems by enhancing parental involvement in and understanding of that school system, it may be beneficial to review some historical data. According to the Northern Lights School Division Brief, only 1.6 % of the northern student population was enrolled in grades 10 to 12 in 1968. Twenty years later that figure had increased to 9.2 %. "It can be seen that the division has made some progress in addressing the drop-out rate by retaining students in school to the higher grade levels. In addition more students are leaving school at higher grade levels and the age-grade discrepancy level has been reduced; however it is still not viewed as anywhere near satisfactory." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief*, p. 26.) Included in the work remaining to be done should be an enhancement plan for the involvement of parents in the education of their children. It is generally considered essential that communications between the school and the community be improved. Two measures were viewed as having potential for enhancing communication. The use of the media by the school to publicize school programs and school activities was suggested. For example, local television and radio are now being utilized by some northern schools to reach parents in the community.

The print media were also seen as a means of informing parents on schools' operation. The guidance counsellor was seen as a second component in the communication process. The counsellor's duties should include home-school liaison to keep parents informed on their children's progress, the school program, and school activities.

Initiatives have been undertaken in several northern communities in both of the above mentioned areas. Schools are beginning to carry out public relations activities utilizing the local media. Counsellor training has been initiated by the Northern Lights School Division. Trained counsellors will soon be working full time in northern schools. An Education Development Fund (EDF) project has also been implemented at Creighton. The objective of this project is to enhance school-home relationships and understanding. "This project is to initiate a system whereby regular contact by school personnel, preferably someone who has good rapport with adolescents and younger students, is maintained with possible early school leavers, students who miss school and students who have any type of a problem." (*Home and School Liaison Coordinator Project,* p. 2.)

The third aspect of improved school-community relations, the emphasis on local participation in the educational decision-making process, is probably the most difficult to address. The 1987 Scharf report on northern school governance carried out an in-depth investigation in this area. Scharf's report recommended the establishment of two separate educational jurisdictions to govern those schools presently administered by the Northern Lights School Division. "That the Minister of Education, under the authority of sections 20 and 21 of *The Education Act* establish two school divisions in the area presently designated 'The Northern Lights School Division'." (Department of Northern Saskatchewan, *Report to the Minister of Education on School Governance in Northern Saskatchewan,* p. 98.) It also recommended that the Creighton and Ile a la Crosse School Divisions remain. It was further recommended that all administrative offices for northern education be moved to northern communities.

The study on the governance of education in northern Saskatchewan made the following observations on further decentralization of educational jurisdiction. "Only in the major towns was any interest expressed in establishing a system of local Boards of Education. Even then, the respondents expressed doubts as to their ability to assume responsibility for the schools and to sustain the current funding and staffing of the schools." (Ibid., p. 94.) The Scharf study suggested that by adopting the above mentioned recommendations it should be possible to meet these objectives:

- to extend the educational program into the community by encouraging local participation and responsibility in school affairs;
- to encourage residents of communities to accept increasing responsibility in the operation of schools; and
- to assist and encourage the establishment of local educational governance structures that extends those rights, privileges and opportunities granted and available to citizens elsewhere in the province of Saskatchewan. (Ibid., p. 97.)

Implementation Plan

The implementation of this recommendation is already underway in northern school divisions. "In order to meet this need, the role of the Home and School Coordinator has taken on a new significance and a training program has been established to give to the personnel in-service to

develop the skills necessary to act as paraprofessional school counsellors." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief*, p. 38.) As well, Ile a la Crosse and Creighton School Division Boards employ counsellors who play an important role in home-school communications.

With respect to improved public relations, the public meeting is the main tool used by school divisions in northern Saskatchewan. Workshops and meetings with local school board trustees were held by the Northern Lights School Division during 1987 and 1988. "Further meetings at both the central division level and at the sub-division level are planned for the current school year." (Ibid., p. 50.) For example, through the joint sponsorship of the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; communications workshops for board members, teachers, and parents have been scheduled. As well, the Northern Lights School Division Board plans to hold some of their monthly meetings in northern communities. The autonomous local school boards at Creighton and Ile a la Crosse have much more immediate contact with their citizens, therefore meetings and workshops of the nature undertaken by Northern Lights are not considered to be as necessary.

Although meetings and workshops are traditionally used for improving school/community communication, they reach a relatively small number of parents. Experience indicates that they are an effective tool in smaller, more isolated communities, but their impact lessens in the larger, more urbanized centers. In these instances, technology such as radio, television, and the print media may be more effective in getting the school's message out to the community. Schools currently using local radio and television to promote positive community public relations report excellent results.

The local governance aspect of this recommendation is also being addressed. "The Board of Education's Central Office is in the process of being moved from Prince Albert, where it has been located since 1976. The Director of Education, one superintendent and professional support staff were relocated to La Ronge in August of 1988. At that time a sub-office, located in Beauval was also established." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief*, p. 15.) Since the presentation of their brief, a full complement of staff has been assigned to the La Ronge office.

"... The Board of Education has established a Recruiting Policy in which teacher candidates, whenever possible, are required to travel to the community and attend an interview with the local school board." (Ibid., p. 41.) The Northern Lights School Division Board also "... recognized the need for an efficient communications network, not only between the central office and the schools, but also between schools." (Ibid., p. 45.) This concern extends to division board/local school board communication. "Division wide workshops, subdivision meetings, wide distribution of minutes, regular meetings among superintendents, board of education members and local boards, rotation of division board meetings and other techniques are being employed to improve the very important communication links between the division board and the community." (Ibid., p. 47.)

Evaluation

The Implementation Committee should be able to assess the implementation of the school counsellor program by September 1989. This is the target date established by the Northern Lights School Division for its commencement.

Public relations programming will be more difficult to evaluate, but it should be possible to determine the extent to which initiatives mentioned in preceding paragraphs have been undertaken by individual schools. The impact of these initiatives can be evaluated through discussions with local school boards, teachers, parents and students.

Similarly, the impact of the partial implementation of the 1987 Task Force on Educational Governance recommendations will be determined by contact with local school boards and community members. It is still too early to make a final assessment on the impact of the changes made in Northern Lights School Division organization and location.

Recommendation #7

It is recommended that a guidance counselling program be developed and implemented in northern schools.

Response to the Issue

This issue has been a long-standing concern in northern Saskatchewan. The 1980 *Report to the Minister of Northern Saskatchewan on Education for the 1980's* identified the need for enhanced counselling services particularly at the grade 7 to 9 and 10 to 12 levels.

Reactions to this issue by northerners suggest that it continues as a concern for the 1990's. "A full network of counsellors is required in the school system from career counsellors to school counsellors." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief*, p. 8.) "Every school that employs a guidance counsellor must ensure that the individual receives proper training so that the employee has the necessary skills to effectively counsel students, as this is an important, and demanding job in any school system." (*Fond du Lac Indian Band Brief*, p. 2.) "School counselling would be more effective if there were more native counsellors who would deal with students on a daily basis." (*Pelican Narrows School Committee Brief*, p. 2.)

Different types of counselling were considered to be important to the well-being of northern students. Career counselling was mentioned in many briefs. It was indicated that effective counselling would better prepare students for the world of work. A second aspect of

counselling which was stressed related to the need for better communication and closer liaison between the school and the community. Counselling programs are considered an essential component of this relationship. The training and employment of native counsellors who speak the language and understand the culture of the community are thought to be critical to the success of a counselling program. As well, mention was made of peer counselling in several briefs. A significant number of presentations noted the serious problems caused by alcohol and drug abuse. It was pointed out that the school, through its counselling program, could address many of the problems students face in these areas.

Relevant Background Information

Based on the input from northern residents the Northern Education Task Force considers it necessary to recommend implementation of a concerted effort in the counselling area. A number of issues make this of paramount importance. First, the dropout rate among northern students remains very high. Second, the use of drugs and alcohol by students is a serious problem. Third, the high incidence of teenage suicides presents a tragic situation that must be addressed. Fourth, the communication between the school and the home needs to be improved. Fifth, teenage pregnancies are a problem. Sixth, the need for career counselling was identified as a priority item. Seventh, "family revitalization" must be addressed in an effective counselling program. Finally, the program should focus on improving the northern child's self-concept. The dropout rate has been substantiated by numerous researchers. "Throughout the past three decades, researchers have attempted to assess the dropout rate of native students ... ." Renaud (1971) reported that, in Canada, in the 12 years between 1951-62, 8,444 Indian students out of 8,782 did not complete high school.

There was a 96% loss of the Indian student population from grades one through twelve. A 1973 study, part of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians (FSI) Education Task Force Report, stated that "... of every 12 to 15 Indian students in Saskatchewan who began in grade one, only one would complete high school." (*Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission Brief,* p. 12.) **Table 7** provides data on the retention rate for northern schools during the past twenty years. Obviously, improvements are being made, but the dropout of students prior to completing high school is still unacceptably high.

Table 7

Retention Rates for Northern Schools

Year	Kindergarten Readiness	Grade 1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	Voc. Sp. Ed.	Total %
1966	9.5%	50.9%	24.8%	12.3%	1.6%	0.9%	100%
1971	12.2%	47.0%	27.0%	11.7%	0.9%	1.2%	100%
1976	15.0%	37.4%	24.9%	16.9%	4.6%	1.2%	100%
1981	14.7%	31.0%	23.4%	17.8%	5.6%	7.5%	100%
1986	9.8%	33.0%	23.0%	18.0%	8.9%	7.3%	100%
1987	10.3%	30.7%	23.1%	16.8%	8.8%	10.3%	100%
1988	9.3%	31.9%	21.3%	17.2%	9.2%	11.1%	100%

Source: Northern Lights School Division Brief

"Escapes from hopelessness are sought, but often end in the use of alcohol and/or drugs as means of short-term escape from an untenable life situation. Gas and glue sniffing are commonly found in pre-teens. From this beginning, the escapes are obvious, ending in broken homes, wife and child abuse and, alarmingly more frequently, in jail or prison." (*Buffalo Narrows Friendship Center Brief,* p. 11.) Other manifestations of hopelessness and despair include teenage suicide, teenage pregnancy, and criminal activity.

The incidence of these problems among northern Saskatchewan youth do not appear to be declining. Most authorities indicate that the schools can play a larger role in combatting these problems particularly as they relate to the need for improved self-concept building techniques and "family revitalization".

The need for improved communication between the home and school has often been identified as an area of considerable concern. The report by Mr. Arnold Tusa, commissioned by Saskatchewan Education in 1985, highlighted this issue. "Parents' concerns were often expressed with a sense of frustration. They recognized the importance of education to their children's future, and yet have watched those children fail, feeling powerless to help. While they know many of the reasons for their children's lack of success and have solutions to offer, many parents expressed difficulty in understanding how the education system operates and how they might influence the system for the good of their children." (*Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission Brief,* p. 17.) On the other hand, "Teachers stated that parents must be involved, but often did not know how to get that involvement. Open lines of communication and increasing Indian and Metis involvement in education are measures required to improve relationships between home and school, between the school and students, and between the school and other agencies." (Ibid., p. 18.)

Finally, there appears to be a need for improved career and vocational counselling. "We see that these areas of employment are there, we can offer science classes and other academic classes, but is this enough to gain jobs for our students? We think not." (*Ile a la Crosse School Board Brief,* p. 2.) The opinion expressed in the Ile a la Crosse School Board brief is based on the concern that students graduating from the K-12 system do not necessarily enter the work force or continue to pursue further studies or training. "For example, 1.5 % of the native population has a university degree compared to eight percent of the non-native population." (*Buffalo Narrows Friendship Center Brief,* p. 26.)

The labor force participation rate for natives in the North is 49 percent compared to 64 percent for the non-native population. (Ibid., p. 27.) A further discouraging statistic indicates that a majority of the native labor force is unemployed or seriously underemployed.

Most relevant studies suggest that a significant role in improving the situation described above can be assumed by an effective school counselling program. In Arnold Tusa's report, *Reaching Out,* four principles were identified as being critical to improving the school situation for Indian and Metis students. One of those principles is particularly relevant to this recommendation. "Efforts to improve the success of Indian and Metis students in school must begin at the school-community level." (*Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission Brief,* p. 27.) Del Koenig, in her study, *Choices: A Proposed Action-Plan for Intercultural Education in Prince Albert* recommended "... the hiring of additional native teachers, counsellors, aides and home-school liaison workers." (Ibid., p. 31.) The Northern Lights School Division recognizes this need for counsellors. "It is hoped that the provision of trained school counsellors will help to keep students in school and provide them with career and personal counselling." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 31.)

Currently, school counselling services in northern school systems vary considerably. The Northern Lights School Division employs two professional counsellors in their student services program. "The student services personnel, a coordinator and a counsellor make provision for these students to attend school in other communities. They also provide counselling and academic support to students." (Ibid., p. 31.) The two counsellors assigned to the student services program are available largely to boarding home students attending school outside of their home communities. Time does not permit these counsellors to attend to the needs of students attending schools in their home communities. As well, Northern Lights School Division has two in-school counsellors based in La Ronge. A well developed guidance counselling program exists there. It includes the following components:

- parent-counsellor meetings;
- alcohol and drug education programs;
- career counselling;
- life skills;
- peer counselling;
- the Quest program; and
- Systematic Training for Effective Parenting classes.

Both the Ile a la Crosse and Creighton school boards offer counselling programs through school based counsellors.

Most Indian band-controlled school systems place considerable emphasis on counselling programs. All Indian bands employ at least one guidance counsellor. In the case of the larger bands such as Lac La Ronge and Peter Ballantyne, as many as five counsellors respond to the needs of approximately 800 students in each system. According to the Lac La Ronge Band Education Policy Manual, "The job of an Indian guidance counsellor is to provide the very vital link between school(s) and the home. In all cases, they are the advocate of the student and as such their main duty is to ensure that the student receives a fair hearing from the teacher(s), principal(s), school board(s), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada or other agency that has some transaction with the students. The major portion of the time will be spent in listening to students, talking to parents, hearing their concerns and ensuring that these concerns reach the ears of the decision-makers." (Lac La Ronge Indian Band, *Education Policy Manual, 1988*)

Implementation Plan

Fortunately, there is a plan for the implementation of guidance counselling programs for most northern schools. The Northern Lights School Division has a training program for 15 para-professional school counsellors. "The training program was established in 1987 with joint funding from the Education Development Fund and Northlands Career College." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 30.) The students completed their training last summer and are working in northern schools. The implementation of the program, the creation and funding of the necessary positions, and the provision of adequate support materials was in place by September 1989.

Although considerable optimism does prevail with respect to the implementation of the above mentioned counselling program, there is concern that it will not be able to fulfill all of the needs in this area. For example, small schools may not receive the service they require. Expansion of the program hinges on the continued training of suitable northern candidates. No plans have been developed to ensure that there will be additional people trained as guidance counsellors for northern schools. It may be possible to gain access to the counsellor training program offered through the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College at the University of Regina. As well, added attention should be given to the recruitment of teachers with counselling backgrounds. These qualified teachers could substantially enhance the overall guidance program in northern Saskatchewan schools.

Evaluation

The Implementation Committee will be able to assess the operation of the counselling program very quickly. Funding will have to be provided to allow Northern Lights School Division to proceed with its plans. The effectiveness of the program will be much more difficult to determine. Research into student retention rates over an extended time period will provide much of the data. Interviews with students, parents, and teachers will be necessary to gauge their reactions to the program. Incidences of alcohol and drug abuse, student pregnancies, and student suicides will have to be documented over an extended period to ascertain the effectiveness of the program in prevention in these areas.

All of these activities will have to recognize that the counselling program is only one variable in a complex situation. Other societal influences will have at least as much impact. These influences are not always positive, and they can detract from the effects of a guidance program. Nevertheless, a solid counselling program should be able to provide a much needed service to the student population

Recommendation #8

It is recommended that the current policy which allows for changes in the school year to meet local community needs be maintained. It is further recommended that present procedures for such changes continue to require school division approval.

Response to the Issue

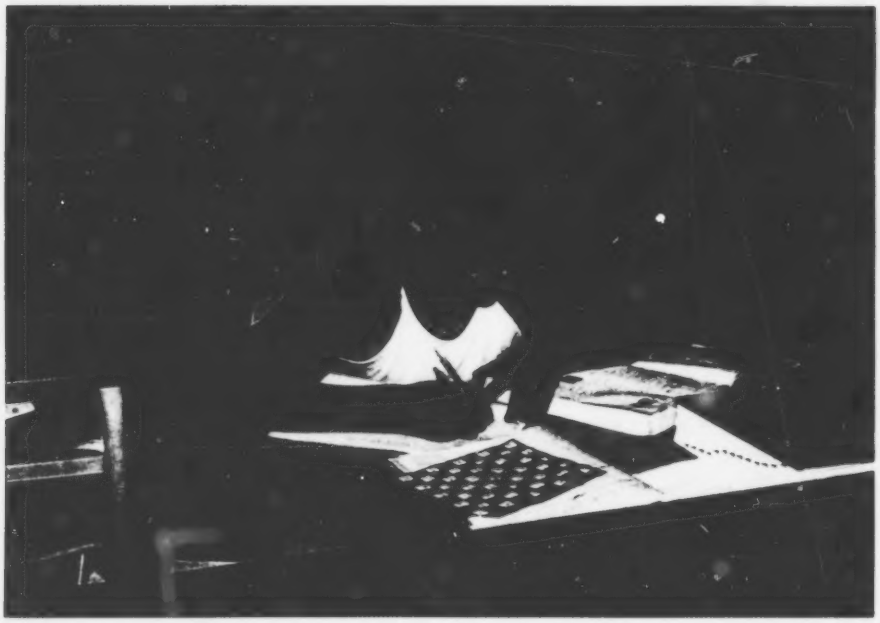
Response to this issue came mainly from the smaller, isolated northern communities, but some of the larger villages and towns also expressed a desire to set their own school year. All briefs commenting on this issue suggested that local needs must be the final determinant. For example, Creighton and Kinoosao residents felt that consideration had to be given to the Manitoba school year due to their proximity to that province. Other presentations felt that trapping, fishing, hunting, and wild rice harvesting seasons had to be given consideration in determining the school year. One brief expressed a cautionary note about making changes. "More flexibility is required because the regional factors have to be considered when determining the school year. What's suitable for Beauval may not be suitable for Stony Rapids. The school year is often set for the convenience of the administration and the teachers; parents are not considered nor consulted." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 18.)

In one community where the school year schedule has been altered the reaction has been favorable. "We are very happy with our altered school year and feel that it is good for our children and our community." (*Wollaston Lake School Committee Brief,* p. 2.) In another community where permission to alter the school year was denied, the reaction was very different. In that settlement, Pinehouse, the Northern Village Council indicated that changes were necessary to accommodate dramatic drops in June attendance. Since their initial request to the Northern Lights School Division Board for a change was denied, a direct appeal to Saskatchewan Education was being considered.

Relevant Background Information

Changes to the provincial guidelines for the school year have been made in the past. This is not peculiar to the North. Saskatchewan Education has prescribed 197 days in the 1988-89

school year, as the minimum for instructional days, but school divisions have the authority to determine the days when the school will be open. These guidelines are specifically addressed in *The Education Act* and Regulations. Problems arise when requests for altered school years result in a reduction in the number of days prescribed by Saskatchewan Education. Northern school jurisdictions, including the Northern Lights School Division, have made adjustments which have decreased the number of days in a school year due to the particular circumstances of a community. To compensate for that reduction, additional time has been added to the school day. Educational authorities generally consider this a drastic measure justifiable only in special situations.



School jurisdictions which have taken this measure include some provincial examples such as the previously cited Wollaston Lake School. Band-controlled school systems find it easier to adopt altered school years, since they do not have to adhere to provincial educational law. Altered school years have been adopted by the Peter Ballantyne Indian Band at their Pelican Narrows and Southend schools and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band at the Stanley Mission school. Interestingly, the Lac La Ronge band has only adapted the school year at one of its seven schools. Community reaction to these changes is similar to that expressed by the Wollaston Lake School Committee. People generally appreciate this attempt to accommodate their traditional lifestyle.

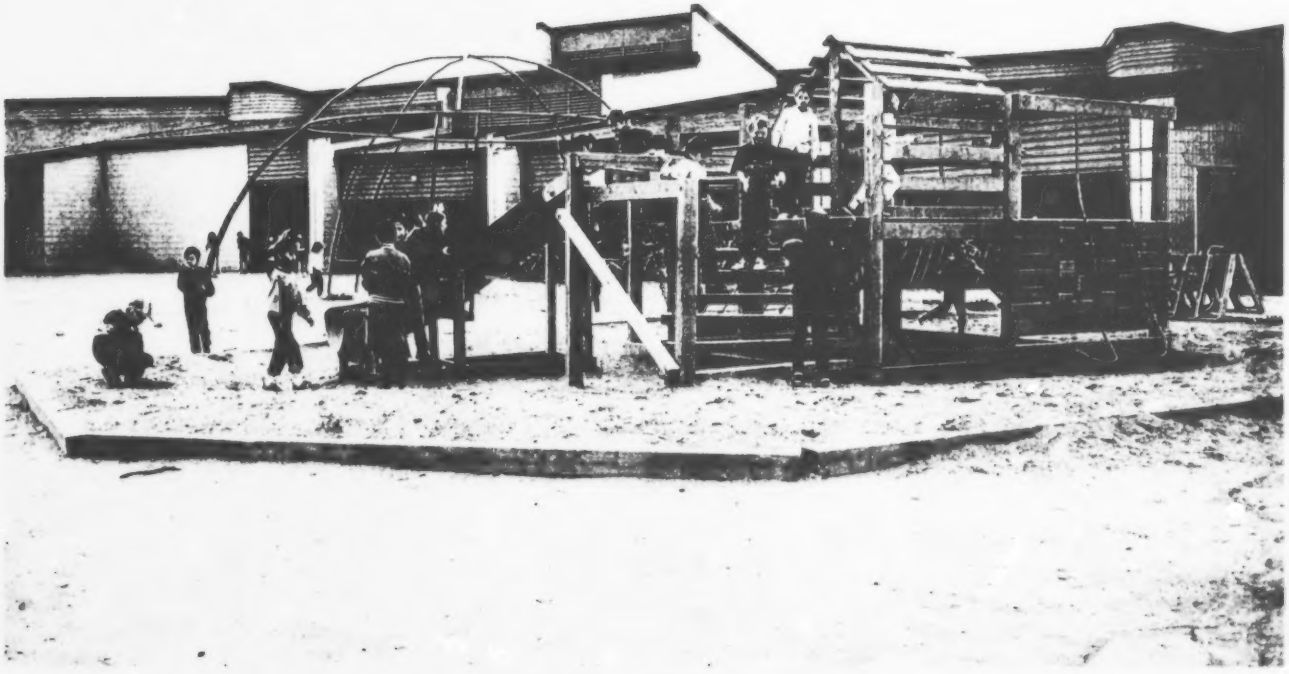
Northern communities also face the problem of the mismatch of school years for their students attending local schools and students attending schools in urban centers such as Prince Albert. In recent years, as more Indian students enroll in high schools, difficulties with time allotments and departmental examinations have been experienced. Mobility factors are also becoming more of an issue with an increasing movement of Indian people to and from urban centers, sometimes several times a year.

Implementation Plan

Implementation of this recommendation is not really a problem since the necessary policies and procedures for change are in effect. Adherence to these policies and procedures is considered necessary to prevent alterations to school years which may have adverse educational effects on students. Present procedures allow for a serious consideration of the local circumstances plus the assessment of educational ramifications by knowledgeable northern educators and decision-makers. In the opinion of the Task Force this system should be retained.

Evaluation

Information on altered school year requests and subsequent decisions should be sought from the various school divisions by the Implementation Committee. Information on the effect of these decisions should also be solicited at the community level. On the basis of that information the Implementation Committee should be able to carry out an evaluation of the implementation of this recommendation.



General Statement

The level of schooling commonly referred to as high school or grade 10 to 12 will be called the Secondary Education Level in keeping with the new Saskatchewan Education terminology. It is provided only in the larger settlements in northern Saskatchewan, but its influence is felt throughout the North. Several issue questions were considered to be of greatest relevance to secondary education:

- Are secondary school standards in northern Saskatchewan high schools equivalent to those found in southern Saskatchewan high schools?
- What assistance can the northern educational system provide for students who have young children? and
- Should Northlands Career College offer sponsored Adult Basic Education programs in communities where a grade 10 to 12 program is already being provided in a high school?

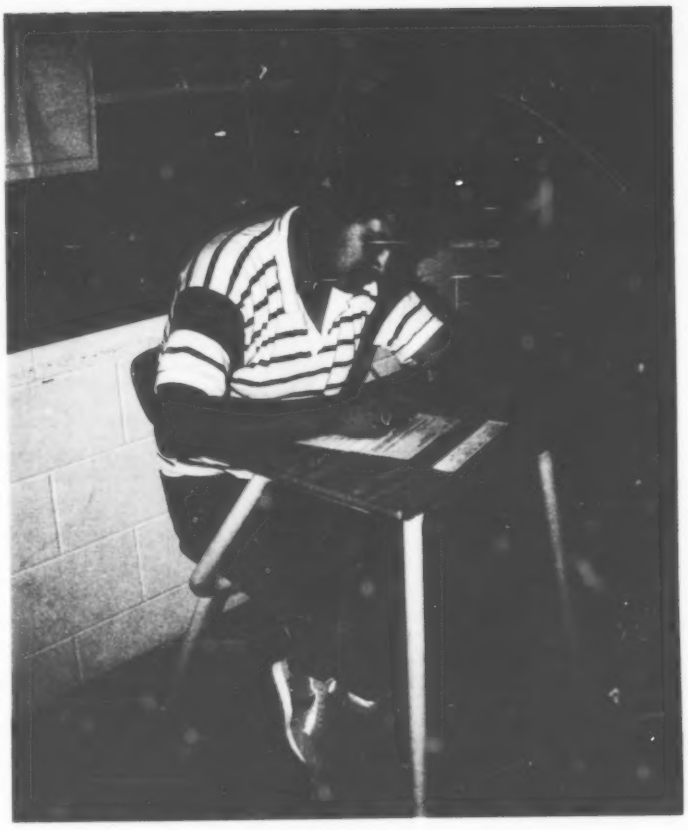
Recommendation #9

It is recommended that northern high school standards be reinforced through the implementation of innovative practices such as distance education to increase the number of options available to northern students, particularly in the sciences and mathematics. It is further recommended that consideration be given to regional high schools in certain areas to offset the effects of low enrollments thereby allowing for greater specialization, increased options, and better facilities.

Response to the Issue

The issues relating to secondary education probably elicited more response than any others. Northerners are most anxious that their children receive an education of equal quality to that provided in southern high schools. This appears to be a fairly straightforward desire, but its complexity is compounded by several factors. For a variety of reasons northerners also want to retain their community high schools. In many instances enrollments in the secondary grades are low, therefore, the choice facing northerners is one between retaining their high schools, with sometimes minimal educational standards, or sending their children away from the community to allow them a wider selection of secondary educational options.

The desire to have secondary classes offered at the community level was expressed at Pinehouse. "We would like to have grades 11 and 12 in Pinehouse so students don't have to move away from home .... Students don't feel comfortable living out of town. They get lonely and quit. If grades 11 and 12 were in Pinehouse, students would be happy and would stay at home and finish school." (*Some Concerned Parents Brief,* p. 1.) Similar sentiments were presented at Sandy Bay. "Our students find it hard enough to continue their education as it is, without having to leave their home communities to get their grade 12." (*Northern Village of Sandy Bay Presentation,* p. 2.) At Stony Rapids northern people expressed similar concerns on "... the problem of high dropout rate of high school students that we send to educational institutions in Prince Albert and other locations. Students fail because of their inability to adjust to city life, loneliness, and social problems." (*Fond du Lac Indian Band Brief,* p. 3.)



Beauval citizens called attention to the complexity of this issue. "The North does not have the student populations as those in the South and at times one class will consist of 10 or 11 students in the high grades and a teacher has to be provided. In turn the lower classes with 25-35 students suffer." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 19.) These low enrollments at the high school level create other problems. "A dilemma for our northern schools is the low enrollments in Division IV programs. Low enrollments lead to less funding, less academic choice for students, teachers overloaded with subjects, and sometimes with subjects they are not trained in." (*St. Pascal School Brief,* p. 2.) The offering of specialty mathematics, science, home economics, and industrial arts classes was particularly affected by low high school enrollments.

Relevant Background Information

The problems associated with the operation of small high schools are not unique to northern Saskatchewan. Rural schools throughout North America face similar problems. "By 1983, the number of these schools with fewer than 10 students per grade will nearly double, from 34 to 63. This means that nearly 25 percent of the 256 schools offering division IV will have fewer than 10 students per grade." (*Rural Education: Options for the 80's,* p. 9.) This study goes on to indicate that "... schools with between 10 and 19 students per grade will rise from 82 to 103." (Ibid., p. 10.) This trend will continue into the 1990's according to data provided in this Saskatchewan Education study. These schools are not cost efficient. A teacher is required for each class offered whether the enrollment consists of five or twenty-five students. Saskatchewan's education grant formula attempts to address this problem through the Small Schools Component of its foundation grant formula. In spite of this compensation, the fact

remains that funds which would normally go towards primary or middle years education are often utilized to finance the operations of small high schools. This is done with the rationalization that it is essential to keep northern students in local schools to finish their grade 12.

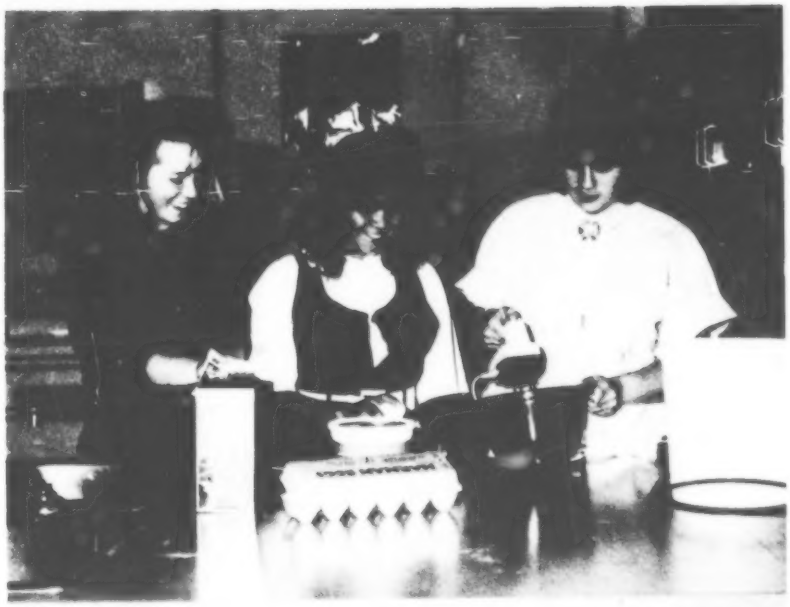
Historically, the solution to the problems associated with operating small high schools has been to amalgamate them into larger composite, regional or comprehensive high schools. Saskatchewan education is replete with examples of this movement which is based on "the bigger, the better" principle. Besides cost efficiency benefits, larger high schools have other advantages. Specialized facilities for science, industrial arts, and home economics can more readily be provided in larger schools. The larger enrollments allow for the hiring of teachers with diverse expertise. As a result, a wider variety of options can be offered. Disadvantages include the impersonality associated with large institutions, the problem of having to bus students considerable distances, and the need to house students away from home in unfamiliar surroundings.

There is no conclusive evidence to indicate that large high schools are necessarily superior to small ones. In fact, considerable evidence exists indicating that small high schools have certain distinct advantages:

- in small schools, the teacher knows each child as an individual and can make special provisions for special needs and talents;
- small schools ... are also easier to manage;
- rural schools provide a kind of heterogeneity rarely found in urban or suburban settings ... ;
- the entire community can be involved in the school;
- it compels the different social groups in the rural community to come to terms with one another at an early age and on a comparatively equal basis;
- more students participated in extra-curricular activities; and
- participation was greater in smaller schools thereby enhancing self-esteem. (Ibid., pp. 40-41.)

These advantages are often considered by parents to be more important than the largely academic ones associated with large high schools. As a result, the desire to retain small, local high schools remains very strong.

Modern technology may be able to offer students in small high schools options not previously provided. It is imperative that these alternatives be considered, because northerners are not likely to opt for regional high schools or for sending their children to larger centers in boarding home or residential situations unless absolutely necessary. Technological advances in teleconferencing, telebroadcasting, facsimile transmission, and electronic mail make these possible alternatives to the on-site, instructor- delivered courses. At least one northern school division is keeping abreast of these developments. "Facsimilator machines are being installed in schools in accordance with a three year plan ... The Division is also installing computerized systems in schools ..." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief*, p. 52.) The division has, at this time, installed facsimilator machines in almost all of their schools.



Alberta Education is in the forefront of these developments. The Department has funded a three year project entitled, "Distance Learning in Small Schools." "Subject specialist teachers called distance education Tutor/Markers are linked to the schools by facsimile machines for electronic transmission of student lessons, and by teleconferencing and computer networks for interactive audio and data transmissions. The Tutor/Markers provide tutoring services via telephone and computer, oral lessons via teleconferencing, and marking services for correspondence lessons which they receive and return via telefax." (Alberta Education, *Distance Learning in Small Schools,* p. 1.) Alberta Education currently provides over seventy courses in business education, industrial arts, social sciences, science, mathematics, English, French, home economics, and the fine arts via distance education technology.

In Saskatchewan, the most advanced use of modern technology for educational purposes is at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, Woodland Campus. Competency-based training programs centered on the use of computer technology are the cornerstones of Woodland Campus' programming. Satellite linkages which will facilitate the provision of distance education are imminent. Training programs utilizing computers, teleconferencing, and other innovative measures have been offered by Woodland Campus at La Ronge, Meadow Lake, and Creighton. The modularized, competency-based nature of their programming offers new prospects for distance education at all levels of schooling.

Implementation Plan

The Northern Lights School Division has begun preliminary investigations into the offering of certain high school classes via distance education techniques. "It may be possible for a very simple form of distance education to be put in place in schools now offering division IV courses on the west side of the Division, to provide improved access to both existing programs as well as to increase options available." (Northern Lights School Division memo to principals, January, 1989) The plan would utilize existing staff and technology to increase the number of options available to West Side high school students. "Teachers could use the facsimile machines to communicate in terms of receiving and returning student assignments, and a

modem for a computer in each school would make electronic networking possible for an additional mode of rapid communication. As well, telephone conferencing could be arranged where necessary." (Ibid.) The Northern Education Task Force views this initiative as an excellent opportunity for a pilot project. With that in mind, financial and other support should be provided to the Northern Lights School Division to implement this project.

As far as the regional high schools concept is concerned the Task Force recommends a cautious and gradual approach. Due to the concerns discussed earlier it would not be advisable to proceed with major changes in the present location of high schools in northern Saskatchewan. It will not be feasible to establish regional high schools in the fullest sense in the immediate future. But it would be possible to encourage consideration of the concept and to strengthen existing programs where students from smaller communities are brought to larger centers for their secondary education. To enable this to proceed successfully special attention will have to be given to the boarding home program and the essential support services such as counselling. It may be feasible for the Northern Lights School Division to designate a larger high school as a pilot regional high school project. If that were to occur, a careful assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of a regional high school could be documented.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the distance education aspect of this recommendation should be carried out by Saskatchewan Education on a long-term basis. Once again, the Alberta Education project provides an excellent model. "During this time an external evaluator will assess its effectiveness and report to the Distance Learning in Small Schools Project Steering Committee at regular intervals." (*Distance Learning in Small Schools*, p. 1.) The evaluator is responsible to the committee for making recommendations for modifications or continuance of aspects of the project based on their interviews and assessment of data obtained. The Task Force Implementation Committee would be an appropriate body to assess such a program.

The regional high school evaluation will be much more subjective in nature. Parental and student reaction to their terms at regional high schools should be solicited. Attendance patterns would have to be reviewed. Retention rates should provide important data, and reasons for dropping out must be documented. Based on these findings some projections about the extension of regional high schools into northern communities could be made. Community consultation sessions about the advantages and disadvantages of regional high schools could be carried out. Parental attitudes in the North concerning mobility are changing and this attitudinal change may result in a gradual change in their perceptions about centralized schooling. An assessment of these views should be an on-going process.

Recommendation #10

It is recommended that day care be provided in schools for students who are parents of young children where numbers and need merit this service. It is further recommended that classes in parenting skills and responsible personal and social behavior be included as part of this day care initiative.

Response to the Issue

"It is a real fact that there are many young mothers here in northern Saskatchewan. These young mothers want to finish their education in order to look after their children. In order to do this they have to have a method of having their babies looked after while they attend school." (*Ile a la Crosse School Board Brief*, p. 2.) This concern was reiterated in many of the presentations made to the Northern Education Task Force. "The only solution is to provide a day care and play school for young children located in the schools. This will enable the students to continue their education." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief*, p. 11.) This brief went on to elaborate a point which was to be frequently heard. "There should be preventative education in the school system so young adults do not put themselves in this predicament. There should also be a support group for parents who do not know how to cope with this issue." (Ibid., p. 11.)

The community of La Loche had 35 teenaged mothers in 1987 of whom 17 dropped out of school as a result of their pregnancies. The other 18 attended sporadically until the end of the year, but all of them experienced babysitting problems which adversely affected their school performance. Dene High School personnel reacted to this problem by preparing a proposal to the Department of Social Services which requested the establishment of a day care program for these student parents. The proposal was submitted, but it has run into an administrative problem which led to its rejection on the grounds that it is not possible, within existing legislation, to provide day care services for infants under the age of 18 months. A remedy to the legislative problem must be found if similar concerns many northerners expressed about this issue are to be addressed. It was not only in large communities such as La Loche where this was identified as a major problem. Many residents of smaller communities in the North expressed similar concerns.

Relevant Background Information

The problem of teenage pregnancies with subsequent difficulties on the part of student parents in continuing their education is not peculiar to northern Saskatchewan. Day care centers for infants of student parents have been established at Regina's Balfour High School and Saskatoon's Mount Royal Collegiate. The Mount Royal Collegiate Infant Center "... is a pilot project receiving its funding from the Saskatoon Student Child Care Services Board and the Department of Social Services. It was implemented in September. The total cost of the project ... $63,000 for the period from September to March." (*Prince Albert Herald*, "Carlton Investigates Day Care for High School Mothers", October, 1988).

This center employs three caregivers and has space for ten children. The parent pays $30 per month for the service. If the student parent is on social assistance the fee is covered by the Department of Social Services.

Another aspect of the Mount Royal Collegiate program which merits mention is the "School Age Mom's (SAM's)" program. "In this program, the mothers meet once a week for one period to discuss issues and concerns of parenting." (Ibid.) The student mothers or fathers are provided with parenting skills. It also allows them to discuss their concerns and problems. Student parents are also encouraged to spend their lunch hours and spares at the day care center. The director of this project, Jane Wallace-Brown, is convinced that this pilot project is the first of many. "They also hope to see more centers set up in other schools ..." (Ibid.)

Implementation Plan

In view of the fact that day care has been identified as a definite need for high school parents and that Dene High School at La Loche is prepared to implement this program in their community it should be possible to have a pilot project operating by September, 1990 "Dene High School and the northern village of La Loche along with the support of many organizations and community people submitted a proposal to the Saskatchewan government to build a day care facility on school property. This school/parenting program would allow the teen mothers to continue their education and at the same time learn proper parenting skills." (*Dene High School Brief,* p. 4.) Based on the Mount Royal Collegiate Infant Center model, which is funded by the Department of Social Services, it should be possible to create a similar service in the community of La Loche where the need appears to be at least as great. The current administrative and regulatory barriers should be possible to overcome since a precedent has been established. Designating Dene High School Infant Care Center as a pilot project may be a temporary solution.

Evaluation

Two aspects of this recommendation will need to be evaluated. First, the actual implementation of the Dene High School Day Care Project will have to be monitored. Second, the value of the abovementioned project will require assessment. Was the attendance of the student parents improved?

Did the dropout rate among student parents decline? Did it improve the educational attainment of the student parents involved in the project? Did the accompanying parenting skills classes provide the parents with improved skills in caring for their infants? These questions can be answered for the Implementation Committee through discussions with Dene High School staff, and most importantly, the student parents.

Recommendation #11

It is recommended that post-secondary institutions continue to offer adult upgrading programs and that cooperation among local education authorities continues to occur prior to the implementation of these programs.

Response to the Issue

Several briefs expressed concerns that the offering of sponsored Adult Basic Education programs by Northlands Career College created problems for grade 10 to 12 programs provided at the local high school. In most high schools, other than Dene High School at La Loche and Churchill High School at La Ronge, enrollments are barely adequate for the provision of minimal high school programs. Any other program which attracts potential high school students away from the school is a cause for concern among educational authorities. These feelings were best summarized at the Ile a la Crosse hearings. "Our Board has mixed feelings about Northlands Career College offering adult Grade 11 and 12 programs here in Ile a la Crosse. We see that people in their mid 20's and older could use these programs to further their education. What bothers us is the fact that people under 21, which the K-12 systems like our school division has a mandate to serve, are able to drop out of our system, then go into the Northlands Career College adult education program to finish their education. We see why, it is because they are paid to attend the adult classes while our system does not have this employment factor built into it. If this happens on a regular basis, our Division IV program is in very real danger of being cut for lack of students! A happy medium must be met ... "
(*Ile a la Crosse School Board Brief,* p. 2.)

It is obvious from the preceding quote that a concern exists, but a solution which will allow both systems to offer necessary programming can and should be found. Suggested solutions to this problem were varied. "The members of the Northlands Career College should be elected

rather than appointed by government to ensure proper representation." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 10.) "These [ABE projects] should continue outside of the school. The strategies for adult education are different from those of a high school. It is often difficult for a person in their 20's to 30's to 'fit' into the regular system." (*St. Pascal School Brief,* p. 1.) "ABE classes are tailor made for accelerated progress in motivated and directed students. Unless division IV programs were altered to offer this same opportunity to adult learners, then ABE classes should definitely be retained." (*Fond du Lac Indian Band Brief,* p. 2.)

Relevant Background Information

The Northern Education Task Force agreed with contentions that adult basic education programming was essential. It concurred with the arguments that adult programming is different and that it is necessary to provide financial support to enable students in their 20's or 30's to attend formal education classes. But it also recognized the legitimate concern expressed by northern school boards that these classes may detract from the local high school program. As a result, the Task Force attempted to present possible solutions which would enhance both types of programming.

In the first instance, it may be possible for high schools in northern Saskatchewan to offer programming which would retain potential dropouts in the regular system. "All too often however, classes for adults, or 'alternative' programs, do little more than replicate the system that the students chose to drop out." (Prince Albert District Chiefs, *Returning Young Adults Study,* p. 8.) The District Chiefs' study goes on to recommend flexible programming with an emphasis on functional literacy designed specifically for the 17 to 23 year old age group. Northern high schools which are anxious to retain this group of students within the school system may be well-advised to follow a recommendation of this nature.

School divisions in northern Saskatchewan have attempted to provide various types of alternate programming for those students identified as potential dropouts. "The AVID (Alternate-Vocational Individual Development) program is designed to upgrade the educational level of students fourteen years or older who experience continual difficulties within the regular school program". (Saskatchewan Education, *A Teacher Information Guide: AVID Program,* p. 1.) The objectives of the AVID program were to:

- upgrade academic skills;
- develop a positive self-concept;
- attain a vocational 10 certificate;
- facilitate a student's return to the regular academic program; and
- provide career counselling. (Ibid., p. 2.)

In actual practice the program took on different characteristics, but the goals remained constant. One northern example of an alternative grade 10 to 12 program which appears to be achieving considerable success is the one at Keethanow High School in Stanley Mission. The philosophy of this program is that not all learners will complete one grade per year, therefore, it is sometimes necessary to spread this achievement over two or even three years. As well, cooperative arrangements with Northlands Career College allow adult students to enroll in regular high school classes. One of the reasons for the success of this program is the strong local school committee support and school administration and staff commitment. The end results have been to maximize the number of grade 10 to 12 students in attendance at the high school and the creation of a positive working relationship between in-school and adult educators. Unquestionably, the beneficiaries are the young adults in the community. (Glenn McKenzie, *Program Development in an Indian Band Operated High School*)

Traditionally, dropouts from the regular school system return to formal education through the adult basic education route. It is generally considered the last chance for individuals who have not succeeded in the regular school system. Most northerners recognize this and support the continuation of adult education programming by Northlands Career College. But they do not want this to happen at the expense of the local high school program, therefore, several changes to the current procedure for the establishment of adult basic education were proposed. It was suggested that a more active role for the local adult education committees be stimulated. Greater cooperation between adult education authorities and K-12 educators and administrators should be encouraged.

Whenever possible the local high school program should be enhanced by that cooperation. The high school may provide the facility for adult education programs in exchange for an increased student enrollment which would enhance budgetary allocations.

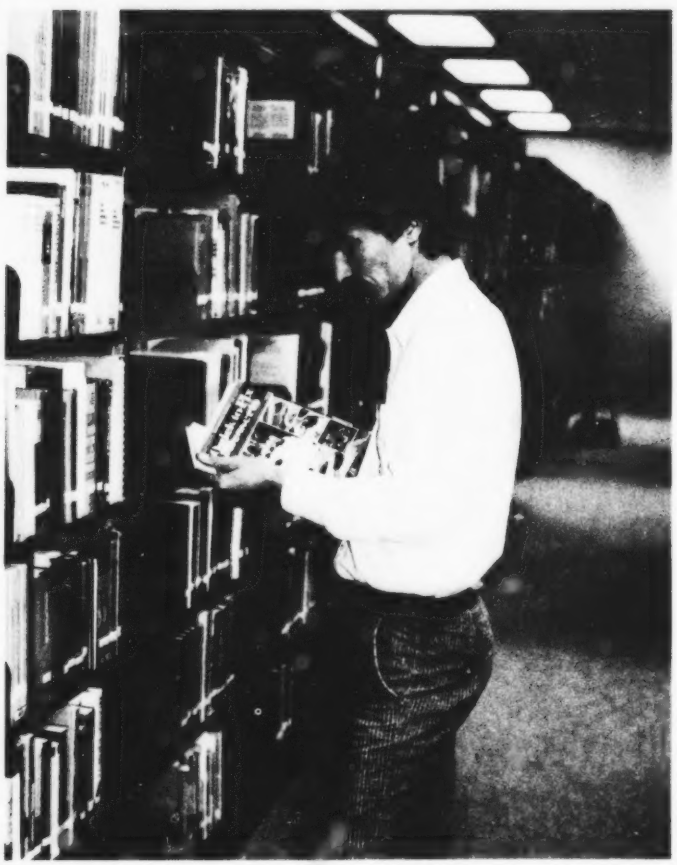
Implementation Plan

The model of cooperative effort between K-12 educational authorities and adult educators followed at Stanley Mission is worthy of consideration for other communities throughout the North. Since Saskatchewan Education, Northern Division, is now responsible for all levels of education, the initiative for this thrust must come from that office. The renewal of more active adult education committees at the community level would be a first step. Measures to ensure

consultation and cooperation between these committees and local school boards would be a logical second step. Consultation among the Northern Lights School Board, Ile a la Crosse School Board, Creighton School Board, and the Northlands Career College Board would seem to be another important measure. The driving force behind this must be Saskatchewan Education. Contact should also be made with the other agencies involved in adult education programming in the North, such as Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this initiative will be carried out by the Implementation Committee. Feedback from local educational authorities will be solicited. Reports from Saskatchewan Education personnel will be sought. Input from the school boards and Northlands Career College will be necessary. This should ensure an increased cooperative effort among the various agencies involved in this critical aspect of northern education.



Post-Secondary Education

General Statement

The area of post-secondary education has not been dealt with by previous government-initiated studies of northern education. It is probably a strong indication of progress that northerners currently view post secondary education as a major area of interest and concern.

The following issue questions were presented to northerners to determine their opinions and feelings about this important area of educational endeavor:

- How can the northern educational system work with employers to help students obtain employment which will be of long-term benefit? and
- Should SIAST and the provincial universities establish quotas for northern students enabling more northerners to receive post secondary education?

A third issue presented here was developed as a result of concerns expressed by northerners:

- Is there a need for increased financial assistance for post secondary students?

Recommendation #12

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education coordinate development of a northern-oriented employment training strategy to prepare individuals for work in renewable, non-renewable, service, government and crown corporation agencies and industries. In cooperation with industry and government, it is further recommended that a human resource development strategy based on employment equity programs be continued and expanded.

Response to the Issue

The extremely high levels of unemployment in the North have been an ongoing source of grievance among northerners. As educational levels among the northern population increase, the concern remains because education has had a relatively small effect on the employment opportunities for graduates of school programs. "There has to be a cooperative effort between the Department of Education, Northern Branch, Northern School Divisions and Industry in order that we are giving programs to our students in order that they are able to obtain employment." (*Ile a la Crosse School Board Brief,* p. 2.) "The education system could also make the students aware of the job opportunities in the north and work towards preparing the students for these jobs." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 9.) These are but two examples of the many presentations to the Northern Education Task Force which highlighted the need for a connection between education and the work place.

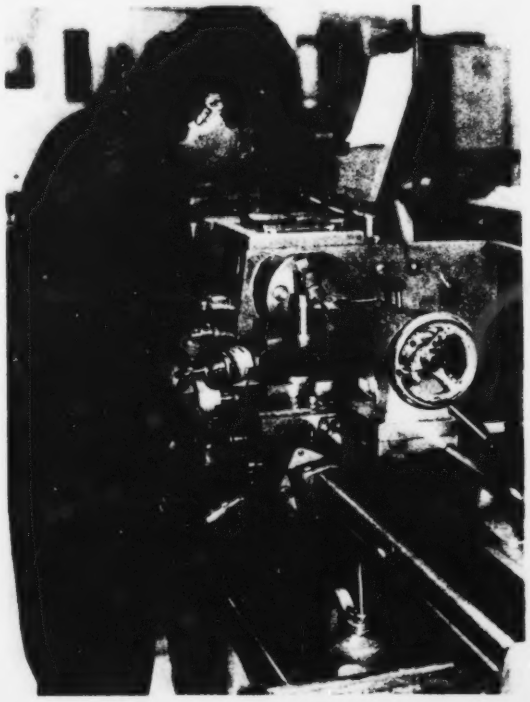
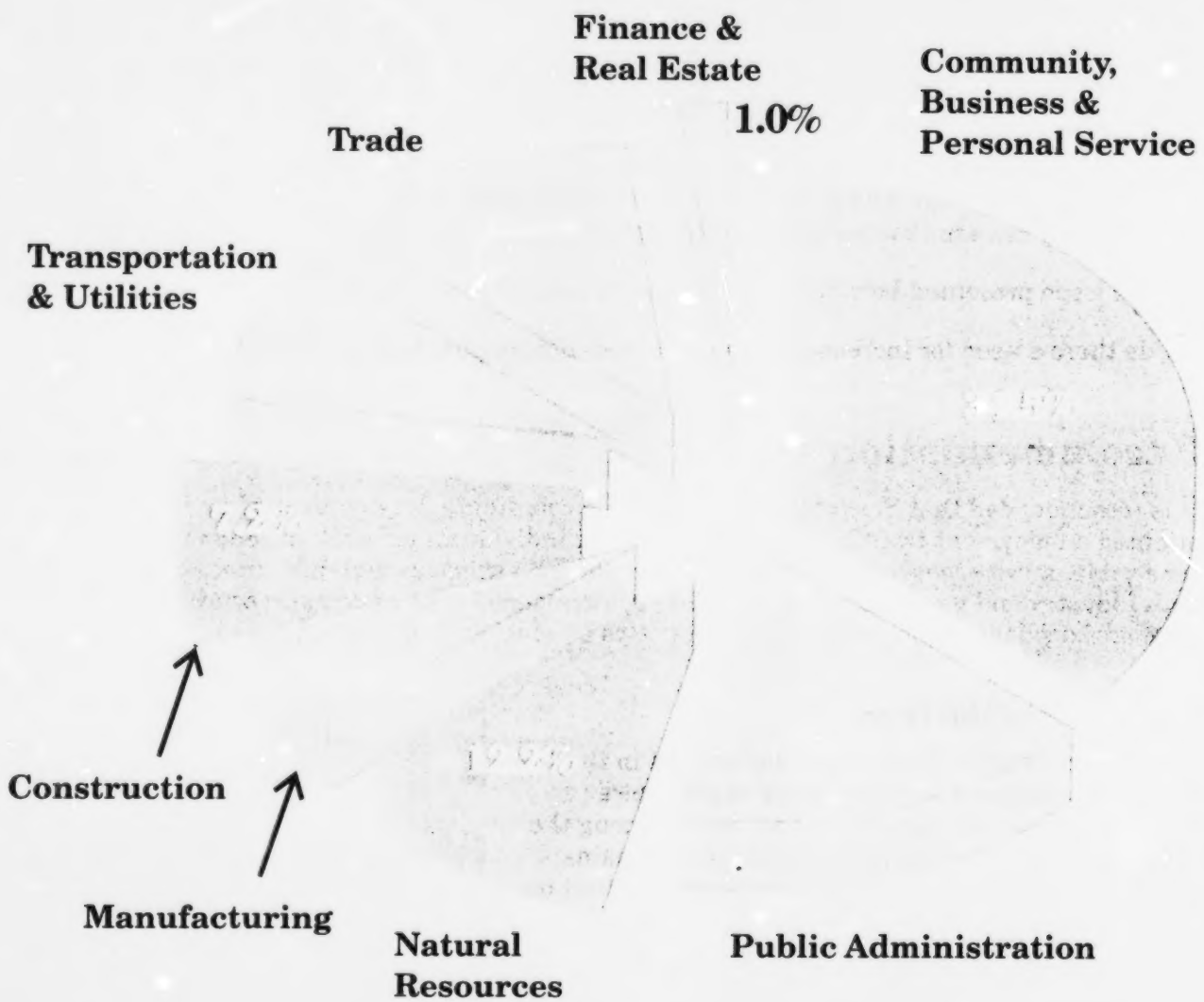


Figure 8

Northern



Source: Saskatchewan Education, 1989

Table 9

Northern Labor Force by Sector By Participation - 1986 Census

Sector	Participation in Labor Force
Natural Resources	935
Agriculture	
Forestry	
Fishing and Trapping	
Mining and Milling	
Manufacturing Industries	520
Food and Beverage Industries	
Wood Industries	
Paper and Allied Industries	
Primary Metal Industries	
Transportation Industries	
Other Manufacturing Industries	
Construction Industries	550
Transportation and Utilities	680
Trade	810
Retail and Wholesale Trade	
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	75
Community, Business, and Personal Service	2635
Education and Related Services	
Health and Welfare Services	
Personal Services	
Accommodation and Food Services	
Public Administration and Defence	1430
Total Labor Force	**7635**

Source: Statistics Canada, 1986 Census Data

Figure 8 provides a breakdown of the northern labor force by sector in terms of percentages of the labor force and **Table 9** displays the same information in terms of actual participation. It is obvious that most northerners are employed in the service industries and public administration. These two sectors account for over half of the total employed northerners.

The non-renewable resources such as mining account for about five percent of the total, while renewable resources such as forestry, fishing, trapping and agriculture employ about seven percent of the northern labor force. Human resource development programs have been implemented in a number of areas, but the fact remains that of the over 7,000 member strong labor force identified by Statistics Canada, the majority are either unemployed or underemployed for much of the year. Many northern jobs are seasonal with a majority of native northerners in the menial ones. Very few natives are found in the professional, managerial, or entrepreneurial occupations. To transform the northern labor force into a more productive and meaningful one will require a concerted effort on the part of all those involved in northern education. "In many communities, more than 50 percent of the jobs are held by transients. Why can't our students be prepared and be educated to hold some of these positions." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 9.)

Relevant Background Information

There is an obvious need for more northerners in the various northern-based industries. A "Human Resource Development Strategy" has been defined by Saskatchewan Education. The resource sector currently provides the best opportunities for employment. "However, augmented technical training will be required for northerners to enter technological and professional careers ... " (Saskatchewan Education, *A Human Resource Development Strategy,* p. 5.) Managerial and entrepreneurial training has also been identified as being needed. "As well, locally initiated small businesses and the further development of tourism and service sector industries will provide additional northern-based jobs." (Ibid., p. 5.) "The division should work cooperatively with all governmental agencies and institutions in order to facilitate the provision of essential education, counselling, sponsorship, and skill training needed for northern people to achieve their educational, employment and personal goals." (Ibid., p. 5.) Saskatchewan Education has recognized this need and is prepared to implement programs to address it.

The Northern Division of Saskatchewan Education expresses the working objectives of the Human Resource Development Strategy in six statements. The first focuses on the

development of programs, the second on the development of people's knowledge and skills, the third on assisting employers, the fourth on assisting the agents of program delivery, the fifth on providing counselling to northern youth, and the sixth on providing them with essential academic and vocational skills.

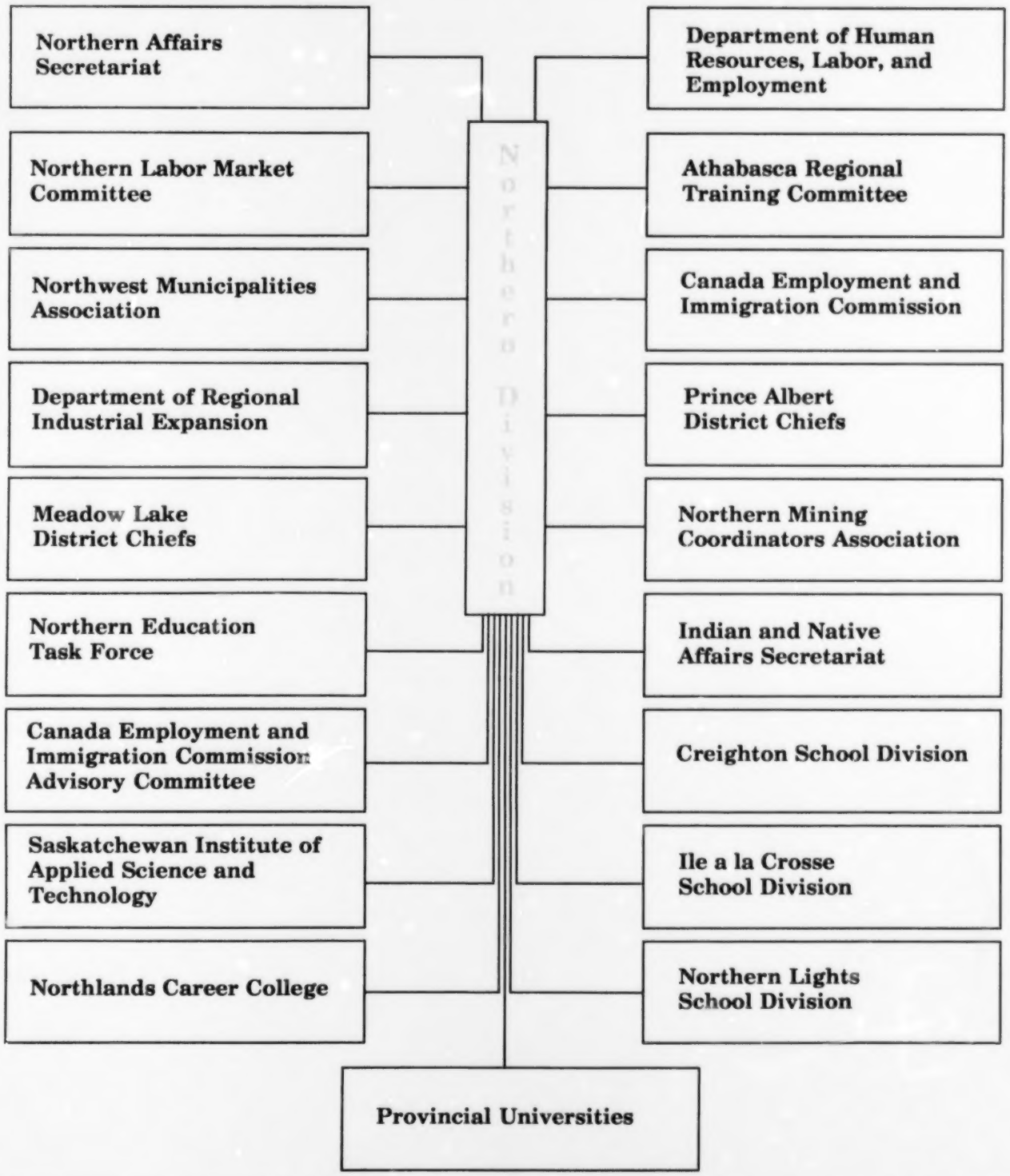
The objectives of the Human Resource Development Strategy are to:

- Link employment-oriented training to the current and projected demands of the provincial labor market;
- Enable the people of Saskatchewan's North to become fully competitive in the provincial labor market;
- Assist northern business and industry to become more productive by making training available to their work force;
- Provide education and training services as close as possible to where people of northern Saskatchewan live and work;
- Ensure that ongoing educational and career counselling are provided to all northern youth by the agents of the northern educational system; and
- Ensure that all northern youth have the opportunity to obtain academic proficiency and vocational skills which will enable them to pursue a wide range of career and personal development goals. (Saskatchewan Education, *Human Resource Development Strategy.*)

The Northern Division has established close working relationships with a wide range of federal and provincial agencies, native groups, and regional councils. **Figure 10** illustrates these linkages. It is through these relationships that the achievement of the human resources development strategy will become possible.

Figure 10

Saskatchewan Education, Northern Division
Linkages to Other Agencies


Northern Affairs Secretariat
Northern Labor Market Committee
Northwest Municipalities Association
Department of Regional Industrial Expansion
Meadow Lake District Chiefs
Northern Education Task Force
Canada Employment and Immigration Commission Advisory Committee
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
Northlands Career College
Northern Division
Department of Human Resources, Labor, and Employment
Athabasca Regional Training Committee
Canada Employment and Immigration Commission
Prince Albert District Chiefs
Northern Mining Coordinators Association
Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat
Creighton School Division
Ile a la Crosse School Division
Northern Lights School Division
Provincial Universities

Implementation Plan

An implementation plan has been developed for the above mentioned **Human Resource Development Strategy**. The goal of this strategy is to reduce barriers which have prevented northern people from taking full advantage of the economic and social development of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Education plans to provide northern people with the education, career counselling, skill training and employment opportunities necessary to participate in the North's economic development. Three major initiatives have been designed to achieve this goal.

First, the department is placing an increased emphasis on curriculum development, career counselling and innovative employment-oriented projects within the K-12 education system. Second, the department plans to develop competency-based, skill training programs to assist adults who have left the formal educational system to gain the fundamental knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to be competitive in the labor market. Third, cooperative projects with business, industry and government to link training to equitable employment for northern people will be promoted by the department. The third initiative incorporates several concurrent activities:

- training needs analysis;
- efficient use of resources; and
- cooperative program planning and development. (Ibid., pp. 7-14.)

This **Human Resource Development Strategy**, when fully implemented, will meet the concerns which prompted this recommendation. Many obstacles stand in the way of implementation. Solutions must be found for issues such as the relationship between academic and vocational education within the K-12 school systems. Associated with this problem are the costs of vocational and technical education in small northern schools, the dropout rate which means that many northerners do not gain the minimal accepted employment or education entrance standards, and the challenge of illiteracy. The over-representation of northerners at lower levels in the organizational structure must be addressed. "And related to all of the above challenges is the problem of removing the barriers to education which northerners face in institutions in remote communities, major northern centers, or southern urban campuses." (Ibid., p. 15.)

An affirmative action program which addresses many of these concerns does exist in northern Saskatchewan. The Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) presents a model of cooperation between government and educational authorities at both the local and university levels. "Historically NORTEP was built on the effort of the Northern School Board to increase the number of native northerners in its teaching force." (*NORTEP Brief*, p. 5.) It is funded by both the federal and provincial governments and sanctioned by the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan; the Faculty of Education, University of Regina; and the

Provincial Board of Teacher Education and Certification. In the past ten years 109 northerners have graduated with teaching certificates and this has enabled the Northern Lights School Division to increase the percentage of native teachers it employs from three percent in 1976 to 24 percent in 1987. If the education equity guideline of approximately 80 percent suggested by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission is to be met, considerable work remains to be done. "However, this goal will be difficult to meet with the existing supply and demand situation. It is essential that steps be taken through NORTEP and other teacher training agencies to increase the recruitment and training of northern native teachers and thus enhance the availability of such staff." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 30.) Despite the difficulties, the affirmative action program described above does present a model action plan for other agencies and industries in northern Saskatchewan to emulate.

Steps have been taken in the mining industry to develop an employment equity program. Jobs within the industry have been identified. Northerners have been, and continue to be, trained to fill those positions and mining companies have committed themselves to hiring qualified northerners. In some instances, particularly in the uranium sector, maximization of the employment of northerners has been promoted. These initiatives have been a cooperative effort among Saskatchewan Education, the mining companies, and representatives of the federal government.

One result of the initiatives described in the preceding paragraph has been the formation of the Northern Labor Market Committee. "The role of the Northern Labor Market Committee is to identify and assess emerging labor market issues in northern Saskatchewan and to develop recommendations and initiate actions toward the resolution of such issues." (Saskatchewan Education, Northern Division, *Northern Labor Market Committee Minutes,* December 1988). The committee meets four times a year to identify and set the priority of issues, coordinate activities and initiate special projects. Membership includes about twenty key representatives from the public and private sectors.

Evaluation

The Implementation Committee should maintain a close working relationship with the Northern Labor Market Committee. Through such a relationship progress reports on affirmative action and employment equity programs could be obtained. The successful implementation of a northern human resource development strategy will be determined, to a

significant extent, on the degree of commitment to employment equity for northerners by all of those involved in northern development. The nature and extent of training programs for northerners will be the cornerstone of the program. The Implementation Committee should be able to determine whether or not action has been taken in this critical area.

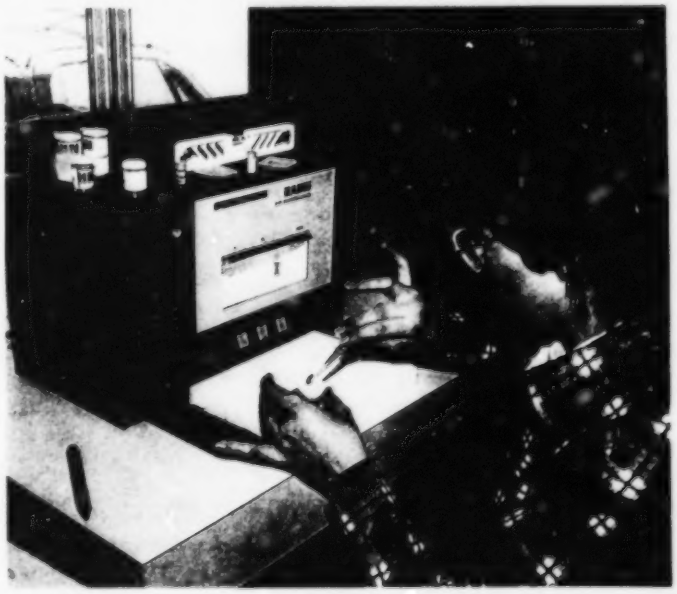
Recommendation #13

It is recommended that post-school training opportunities for northern students be maximized through implementation of the following measures:

- enrollment goals in key training programs for northern students of native ancestry;
- expansion of distance education through initiatives such as the Saskatchewan Community Access Network (SCAN);
- upgrding and expanding adult training facilities in northern Saskatchewan;
- provision of university classes in northern Saskatchewan through the establishment of the Professional Access Program and the offering of courses through Northlands Career College; and
- increased northern representation on post-school boards of education.

Response to the Issue

The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, Wascana Campus was presented as an example of the effective use of enrollment goals for native students. The concept of "enrollment goal" supersedes that of "quota". An enrollment quota often connotes a rigidly enforced limit imposed on an institution as a concession to some external pressure not central to the goals of that institution. Enrollment goals, however, suggest that an institution has made a commitment to strive both to remove the barriers to previously excluded people and to actively assist those people to succeed in the institution. "Wascana with its ten percent native quotas and native counsellors has experienced no difficulty in filling those seats with natives. The success rate of the natives attending has been good." (*Public Responses to the Northern Education Task Force, Summary of Presentations*, p. 18.) It was generally considered that enrollment goals were positive measures, but some northerners did suggest that they did imply a failure on the part of northern school systems to adequately prepare students for competition with their southern counterparts. "Northerners have always received an inferior education. Because of this and the difference in lifestyle, they are not yet in a position to compete with the general population for university and



institute seats. Quotas for northerners are essential if we are to properly train, and educate our people, and move independently into the future." (*Fond du Lac Indian Band Brief,* p. 3.)

In many presentations, northerners concentrated on the need for post school programming and facilities to be located in northern Saskatchewan. The technical institute which was built at Prince Albert was, according to northerners, to provide programming for northern students on a priority basis. Due to a province-wide admissions policy Woodland Campus has a two year or more waiting list in many courses. As a result, northerners have not been able to gain access to training programs. This issue remains a major source of concern to northern people. The distance education programming offered by Woodland Campus is generally well-received but for a variety of reasons its impact has so far been limited. Reasons cited for the lack of success of distance education programming included:

- the lack of acceptable, qualified instructors;
- the scarcity of adequate facilities;
- technical difficulties; and
- recruitment procedures.

Several presentations centered concerns on the dearth of university programming in northern Saskatchewan. Outside of teacher-training provided by the Northern Teacher Education Program, other university offerings are severely limited. Recent initiatives by Gabriel Dumont Institute to provide Social Work and Business Administration programs in northern communities are seen as positive measures. In communities outside of La Ronge the only university programming available is through Athabasca University, an Alberta-based distance education institution. If the only alternative is to move south for post-secondary training then considerable emphasis must be placed on counselling students through a difficult initial adjustment period. Most northerners feel that at least the first two years of arts and science university programming should be offered in the North.

Relevant Background Information

A number of the concerns raised by northerners in reaction to this issue were addressed by post-secondary training institutions in briefs they presented to the Northern Education Task Force. With respect to enrollment goal systems no direct response was provided by the post-secondary institutions, but it has already been pointed out that the Wascana Campus of SIAST does employ an enrollment goal system for native students. According to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission an expansion of this program would be appropriate. "Persons of Indian ancestry are not receiving equal benefit from the education system of our province. The disparity in benefits to persons of Indian ancestry from our education system is tantamount to a crisis." (*Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission Brief,* p. 79.) The Commission goes on to say that, "Equal benefit means that persons of a group or class are not only given equal opportunity to enter into a system, but that in addition, the system or institution will be examined to determine whether the minority group has achieved the expected proportionate representation." (Ibid., p. 79.) Enrollment goal systems are one way of achieving this proportionate representation.

Representation on post-secondary boards of education by northerners does occur. For example, a northerner currently holds a seat on the SIAST board. As well, northerners comprise the

entire membership of the Northlands Career College board. There is some concern among northerners that these are not elected members. "The members of the Northlands Career College board should be elected rather than appointed by Government to ensure proper representation." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 10.) Northerners also control the Northern Teacher Education Program Council which is the only university level training program permanently offered in the North. Other post-school institutions with a presence in northern Saskatchewan, such as Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, also have northern representation on their governing boards.

Woodland Campus of SIAST did address several of the other concerns. In response to these concerns the following recommendations for improving educational services in the North were made:

- Development of a transitional program in cooperation with the K-12 system to minimize the duplication of resources and effort. If a detailed laddering process were in place, graduates or leavers of the K-12 systems could quite easily move into post-secondary educational programs. These people have the right to obtain as much post-secondary technical and vocational education right within their own community as they need.
- Establishment of more learning centers that are fully equipped and staffed to enable individuals to access training in or near their home community. Where there are learning centers already established, these would be upgraded to handle the full range of services. These learning centers would assist students to make the transition into post-secondary education.
- Continue to employ, wherever possible, local qualified residents to instruct the programs. Woodland Campus supports the utilization of local people to teach the programs offered and is prepared to provide the necessary in-service training required to carry out their duties.
- Better articulation with the industry and government departments so quality and current training opportunities are available that will meet the demand for a skilled workforce. The Campus has a large resource it can draw upon to quickly respond to training needs and because there are already systems in place, we see no need to develop our own. However, we must make ourselves available on demand and be a part of the system so everyone can benefit from our resources. (*Woodland Campus Brief,* p. 2.)

As well,Woodland Campus indicated a strong commitment to serving the people of northern Saskatchewan through greater utilization of distance education, existing Northlands Career College and high school facilities, and the services of native controlled educational organizations such as Gabriel Dumont Institute and the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.

The University of Saskatchewan also indicated that they were willing to increase their presence in northern Saskatchewan. "In the past, the University of Saskatchewan has not delivered many university courses in northern Saskatchewan. The Community College Contract of 1974, which governs the way in which classes from either university are 'brokered' through the regional colleges, has been a poor instrument for rural areas whether in the North or South." (*University of Saskatchewan Brief,* p. 3.) Measures have been undertaken to improve the involvement of northerners in university programs, both on and off-campus:

- a native admissions policy has been adopted;
- an affirmative action program for native students has been implemented by the College of Arts and Science;
- the Indian Teacher Education Program has been established on-campus;
- affiliation agreements for teacher training off-campus have been negotiated with the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program and the Northern Teacher Education Program;
- the National Native Access Program to Nursing started in 1984;
- information services in northern Saskatchewan have been improved;
- a Native Orientation Program has been set up;
- a Native Liaison Officer has been hired by the university; and
- televised instruction of university classes to northern communities is in place.

"We believe that our current mix of classes and methods of delivery, supplemented perhaps by Athabasca University offerings, may be all that is required if an agency like Northlands Career College can build an extensive support system for northern students." (Ibid., p. 5.)

The Northern Teacher Education Program Council appears to be taking the offering of university classes in the North one step further. The Council believes "... the time has come to expand the model to provide the same kind of access to a variety of professional careers which Northern Teacher Education Program has provided in elementary school teaching." (*Northern Teacher Education Program Brief,* p. 7.) "The diversification of program offerings would include at least two additional 'streams' of students: (i) pre-service preparation for secondary school teaching ... and, (ii) a Professional Access College stream." (Ibid., p. 7.) The Professional Access College stream would include an Arts and Science program. Its primary purpose would be to prepare students for on-campus studies. Affiliation with both of Saskatchewan's universities would be sought. "In the long term the possibility of establishing Access College seats in some of the Colleges might be explored, especially in connection with career routes highlighted by the Access College in particular selection intakes." (Ibid., p. 8.) The fact that the Northern Teacher Education Program has a proven track record in northern Saskatchewan has enlisted a lot of support from northern residents for this proposed extension of their programming.

Strong support for the Northern Teacher Education Program proposal to extend its current offerings to include the training of secondary school teachers and the provision of the first two

years of arts and science programming was indicated. "There is a need for a first year Junior College facility located in the North to assist northerners in furthering their education without having to move to the city, miles away from their home communities and to unfamiliar surroundings." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 16.) "Be it resolved that the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) support the need for the development of a northern professional access college and to ask the Minister of Education to consider the creation of a northern professional access college program." (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, Northern Branch, November 23, 1988). Northerners generally recognize the Northern Teacher Education Program as a credible post-secondary institution. They believe that it is a logical vehicle for the provision of further university programming in northern Saskatchewan, and therefore, support for its Access College proposal is found throughout the North.

Other models of technical and university class delivery systems for northerners are to be found within native organizations. Gabriel Dumont Institute has offered Social Worker, Human Justice, and Business Administration training programs in the North. "Through the Institute's affiliation with both the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan and its capacity as the Native Services Division of SIAST, the Gabriel Dumont Institute can deliver accredited training." (*Gabriel Dumont Institute Brief,* p. 7.) As well, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies is currently providing Business Administration training for northern Indians through an affiliation agreement with Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, Palliser Campus. The Saskatchewan Indian Federated College provides Social Work training for northern Indians under the auspices of the Prince Albert District Chiefs Council. And the Meadow Lake Tribal Council has undertaken a major initiative in the delivery of adult basic education, technical training, university, and literacy programs in northern reserve communities.

All of the above mentioned initiatives are important to the development of adult education programming in northern Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, some northerners have become confused when dealing with the different agencies involved. Accreditation is also a concern. Are all programs presently offered of a standard acceptable to southern technical institutions and universities? Will northerners be able to gain access to jobs on the basis of training provided in the North? The Northern Education Task Force believes that some clarification is necessary and that efforts should be made to ensure that duplication of services is not occurring.

Implementation Plan

The implementation of this recommendation is ongoing in northern Saskatchewan. The Northern Education Task Force would like to see an expansion of current programs. The Task Force supports the initiative of the Northern Teacher Education Program Council in establishing a Northern Access College. It supports and encourages Woodland Campus to extend its programming in the North. The Task Force urges the increased utilization of existing facilities and the construction of new ones in all regions of the North, where necessary, to ensure technical program delivery in northern communities.

The Task Force supports the Northlands Career College contention that, "An investment in suitable facilities will reassure the community that both Government and the College intend to fulfill the mandate of 'preparing northerners to participate fully in the economic development of Saskatchewan'." (*Northlands Career College Brief,* p. 6.) The establishment of such facilities would enhance the institutional presence necessary for post-secondary programming. For example, northerners have and will continue to relate to Northern Teacher Education Program as an institutional presence in the teacher education field. A similar presence is required in other areas of post secondary programming.

The ultimate goal of all of the aforementioned programs being proposed by adult education agencies active in northern Saskatchewan is to enhance northerners' opportunities to become productive citizens in Canadian society. Since many northerners have heretofore been denied these opportunities, measures such as affirmative action, employment equity, and enrollment goal systems are now required. "In the past, equality may have been equated with identical treatment. Today, as it has been defined by the Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan, identical treatment does not necessarily mean equal treatment. To achieve equality it may be necessary to have different treatment." (*Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission Brief,* p. 79.)

While the Northern Education Task Force supports these initiatives, it wishes to see the development of an implementation plan which would enhance cooperative efforts among the various adult education programming agencies. Overlapping mandates have created considerable confusion. To ensure that services are delivered to the adult student population with maximum efficiency and effectiveness this situation must be resolved. There is undoubtedly space for all these institutions and agencies currently involved, but steps must be taken to facilitate program delivery and coordination. Saskatchewan Education, Northern Division, since it is the only organization with the authority to carry out this plan must initiate actions to facilitate the necessary cooperation. Recent steps have been undertaken to insure cooperation between Northlands Career College and the Northern Teacher Education Program. That initiative should be encouraged and expanded to include all adult education authorities in northern Saskatchewan.

Evaluation

The Implementation Committee should solicit reports from Saskatchewan Education, Northern Teacher Education Program, Northlands Career College, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College on their program plans for the 1989-90 school year. The content of those reports should provide adequate information for an assessment of the extent to which this recommendation is being implemented.

Recommendation #14

It is recommended that opportunities and support for northern post-secondary students be maximized, since future development of the north will be greatly determined by a well trained, suitably qualified northern population.

Response to the Issue

Responses to this issue were not numerous, because it was not placed directly before northerners as a question. But the concern was raised, and the Northern Education Task Force considered it to be sufficiently important to warrant particular reference. It is generally agreed that the higher the level of education in any geographic area the better the employment picture of that area becomes in the long term. The more educated the population, the more versatile it is and the more it is able to generate its own employment. It is also believed that a higher level of education among northerners would increase their mobility potential. Obviously, this would have positive implications for individuals, but the results for the North may be negative. There was an emphasis on the need for northern job opportunities for trained, qualified northerners.

Relevant Background Information

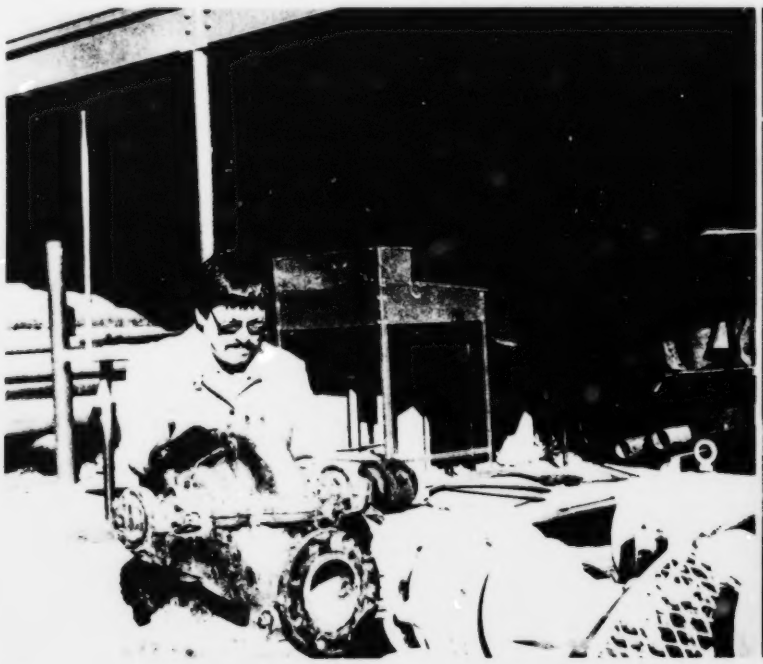
During the past twenty years adult education opportunities have greatly improved for northerners. The introduction of the community college system has brought benefits to the North. Training in a variety of occupations has been provided in northern locations. The increase in the number of high school graduates from northern school systems has led to a subsequent increase in the number of students from the north who are enrolled in post-secondary training. Northerners have graduated with degrees in social work, education, law, medicine, nursing, etc. Others have become certified mill operators, carpenters, plumbers, guidance counsellors, electricians, and so forth.

Funding assistance for northerners wishing to enter post-secondary training programs does exist. The provincial government currently provides assistance through a variety of programs:

- Northern Training Program;
- Saskatchewan Skills Development Program;
- Saskatchewan Skills Extension Program;
- Native Career Development Program; and
- Saskatchewan Youth Access Program.

As well, joint agreements with the federal Department of Regional Industrial Expansion (DRIE) have provided training funds through the Special ARDA and NEDSA programs. Another major player in the provision of post-secondary education has been the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC). The Canadian Jobs Strategy currently assists northerners in gaining access to training opportunities. In the case of treaty Indians, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada also plays a role in the area of post-secondary and occupational skills training.

Private corporations have recently become much more involved in the funding of post-secondary training. Traditionally, their involvement has been limited to the provision of scholarships and bursaries. The announcement by the Saskatchewan Power Corporation that it was creating a three million dollar fund to promote individual entrepreneurial and training endeavors may be the forerunner to other private sector participation in this area. It opens the door for the type of activity undertaken by the Kellog Foundation or the Ford Foundation. Post-secondary funding by these private institutions has significantly enhanced adult education during the past several decades in both Canada and the United States.



Implementation Plan

Unfortunately, many of the above mentioned training initiatives appear to be threatened by funding cutbacks. Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, according to the latest available information, will be cutting back on the number of sponsored training seats available. The Northern Economic Development Subsidiary Agreement (NEDSA) is coming to an end and will no longer be available as a source of funding.

Realignment in the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion appears to threaten the Special ARDA program which has spent considerable amounts of money on northern training. If these events actually occur the onus for funding will reside almost entirely with the provincial government. It is not likely that provincial levels of funding will increase dramatically, particularly in times of serious financial constraint. As a result, the Northern

Education Task Force shares the concerns expressed by northerners and encourages Saskatchewan Education to take steps to ensure the continuation of federal funding at a minimum of previous levels. Efforts should also be directed at the private sector to encourage initiatives such as the one undertaken by Saskatchewan Power Corporation. Other private corporations could significantly enhance the employment of natives by adopting training initiatives designed to facilitate their entrance into the work force.

Evaluation

Saskatchewan Education, Northern Division should be able to provide the Implementation Committee of the Northern Education Task Force with the budgetary information necessary to determining the post-secondary funding allocated for northern Saskatchewan. Based on that information the Implementation Committee will be able to determine the effect of the changes in northern training funding levels. The proposed changes to federal-provincial agreements and their impact on northerners' access to training opportunities will have to be assessed in the light of that information and data on numbers of students gaining access to post-secondary training.

General Statement

There were several recommendations the Northern Education Task Force developed which have an impact upon all aspects of northern education. These recommendations are central to the operation of all educational programs in the North. The following issue questions stimulated their formulation:

- How can the different northern educational systems cooperate to achieve the highest possible standards of education?
- Is there a need for improvements in teacher welfare particularly as it relates to accommodation? and
- Is there a need to review funding arrangements for educational programming in the North?

Recommendation #15

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education facilitate the development of an education co-ordinating committee, comprised of representatives from school boards, Indian Band educational authorities, post-secondary education boards, teacher associations, and relevant agencies such as Saskatchewan Education, Social Services, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, to share information and to discuss education issues of common concern.

Response to the Issue

The problems of inter-agency cooperation have plagued northern education for many years. "There seems to be a need for better communications between the academic areas and the adult education areas. At times neither group knows what the other is intending to do in communities until it happens. In some cases it causes frictions that could have been settled before final action was taken." (*Ile a la Crosse School Board Brief,* p. 2.) "They must communicate better and talk things out more. This is the only way to solve problems." (*Wollaston Lake School Committee Brief,* p. 2.) "Why can't we all work as a team in order to better provide the services that are expected of us?" (*Sandy Bay Local School Board Brief,* p. 5.) "Northern community based resources must cooperate and integrate more - Social Services, Medical Services and Education Services must redefine their roles." (*R. Johnston Brief,* p. 2.) "Input is required from the grassroots level. For example, Beauval has two high schools within a one mile radius. Whether this is necessary is the question. Wouldn't the quality of education improve considerably if these two schools were to combine their resources?" (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 15.)

There is an unquestionable realization at the community level that increased cooperation among educational agencies is required. According to northern residents it is imperative that adult and in-school educational authorities combine forces to plan and offer education programs. Other briefs and oral presentations emphasized the fact that a student's educational progress is often determined by health and social factors. These factors have traditionally been outside the realm of the educator, but it was the opinion of many people that increased cooperation among education, health and social services was necessary. Some northerners also believe that educational offerings are hampered by conflicts between educational agencies as to who has responsibility for delivery or implementation of programs.

Relevant Background Information

The basis for making this recommendation rests with the need for maximum cooperation to ensure the best possible utilization of minimum funds for the benefit of northern students. Several briefs stressed the necessity of cooperation between adult educators and in-school educators at the community level. Adult programming may be enhanced by utilization of existing school facilities. K-12 programs may benefit from the enrollment of adult students in high school classes thereby bolstering low enrollments. Increased technical, vocational, and business classes for adults may be possible through the use of high school shops, laboratories, computers, typewriters, and data processing equipment. To facilitate this there must be improved communication between post-school and in-school education decision-makers.

Examples of the need for joint efforts between federal educational authorities as represented by the Indian Bands, and provincial school boards were provided. If one accepts the premise that increased enrollments are necessary in many schools, particularly at the high school level, in order to provide a higher standard and greater variety of programming in northern schools then joint efforts between Indian Bands and provincial educational authorities may partially provide a solution. Two small high schools in the community of Beauval is probably the most obvious example of an instance where cooperation between the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Northern Lights School Division could lead to a wider range of educational opportunities for all of the secondary students of that area. Joint efforts do exist in the form of tuition agreements which facilitate the attendance of non-Indians in the Lac La Ronge Indian Band operated school at Stanley Mission or the enrollment of Indians in the Northern Lights School Division schools at Deschambault Lake or Turnor Lake for example. Thus, it should be possible to extend these cooperative endeavors to other situations. If cooperation was to be increased the benefits would accrue. For example, larger schools are generally more cost efficient. Duplication of services would be reduced. The quality of educational opportunities for northerners would likely improve. Another example of the benefits of cooperation can be found in the Northern Teacher Education Program. This program offers an accredited teacher training course open to all northerners.

Although it is governed by a Council comprised of members of the Northern Lights School Division Board, its mandate allows it to include all northerners in its program. "NORTEP is an affirmative action program and, as such, primarily targets persons of native ancestry for selection: arrangements have been made for the ongoing entry into NORTEP of persons of Indian and Metis ancestry, both Treaty and non-Treaty. Some students of non-native ancestry have also been selected ... NORTEP, therefore, in principle and in practice encompasses the full spectrum of 'northern' ancestry within its student population." (*NORTEP Brief,* p. 1.) To facilitate this involvement the NORTEP Council established a NORTEP Review Committee which includes representatives from the Northern Area Teachers' Association, Northern Lights School Division, Saskatchewan Education, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ile a la Crosse School Division, Creighton School Division, Lac La Ronge Indian Band Education Branch, the University of Saskatchewan, and the University of Regina.

Examples of broadening the scope of cooperation among non-educational agencies in northern Saskatchewan are few and they are usually found at the community level. An interagency network group has been started in La Ronge. This group consists of representatives from the Lac La Ronge Indian Band Social Development and Education branches, the Indian-Metis Friendship Center, the La Ronge School Board, Churchill High School, the Department of Social Services, Canada Health and Welfare, Native Women Counselling Program, and the Department of Health. Although the major area of concern relates to alcohol and drug abuse it is an example of inter-agency sharing of information and provides a forum for the discussion of various matters of mutual concern. At Ile a la Crosse a unique program has been started. Under the title **Circle Program**, representatives of all agencies in the community and concerned citizens meet on a regular basis to discuss problems and issues. Although not specifically directed at educational matters, the Circle Program does have an influence, in a positive way, on education offered in the community since it is based on the overall concept of **Popular Education**.

Implementation Plan

The model presented by the Northern Teacher Education Program could serve as an example of the cooperation required in all northern educational pursuits. It is proposed that a coordinating committee comprised of representatives of all concerned educational agencies plus the departments of social services and health, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and northern municipal representatives, be established. The purpose of this committee would be to discuss educational issues of common concern, to promote cooperative efforts at the local level and to share information on problems and successes in northern education. Implementation could be immediate under the leadership of Saskatchewan Education.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this recommendation would be based on two sources of information. First, the chairperson of the above mentioned committee could report directly to the Implementation Committee on the effectiveness of the committee's deliberations. Second, input from local educational authorities would be solicited. The purpose of this would be to determine the influence the committee deliberations were having at the local level.

Recommendation #16

It is recommended that Saskatchewan Education review funding levels for northern education systems, taking into full consideration the unique factors which have an effect on northern education such as:

- the sparsity of population and travel distances;
- the costs of recruiting, communications, and maintenance;
- the need for instructional innovations; and
- the difficulty of providing adequate and acceptable housing for educational staff.

Response to the Issue

Although this issue was not originally addressed in the questions presented to northerners, the presentations to the Northern Education Task Force often centered on funding. "A couple of years ago, the Department of Education changed the way that they used for the foundation grants that are paid to northern Divisions. We were receiving a northern factor and also a 90 percent refund on plant operations and maintenance. This system was working satisfactory until someone in Regina got the great idea that changes were needed in this funding method!" (*Ile a la Crosse School Division Brief,* p. 3.) Similar sentiments were echoed by a second northern school division board. "The problems faced in education in northern Saskatchewan are unique in many respects and they require unique solutions ... The challenge will be there to diversify programs, teaching strategies and resources to reflect these differences. The Department of Education must also reflect these added responsibilities and respond with appropriate support staff and appropriate funding." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 1.)

The concerns about funding were not restricted to school boards. "If we wish to provide good quality education in Northern Saskatchewan, we must be prepared to pay for quality staff." (*Northern Village of Beauval Brief,* p. 2.) Beauval residents went on to stress the need for lower pupil-teacher ratios to allow for the addressing of individual needs. "This is perhaps the central issue in northern education; how to allow a child to develop his or her full potential in a school system that is severely constrained by factors of geography and small populations. ... To permit even a semblance of catering to individual differences in such a system absolutely demands that classes be kept small .... To apply the same pupil-teacher ratios in the north that is used in the south is just not fair to our children ..." (Ibid., p. 12.) Considerable concern was expressed about pupil-teacher ratios, particularly at the elementary level, throughout the

North. Since teacher salaries account for approximately 60 percent of a northern school division's budget, any lowering of those ratios will have a significant effect on funding.

Another area of concern is the effect of financing on the welfare of teachers, particularly concerning accommodations. The quality of education provided in the North is dependent upon the quality and motivation of the North's teachers. And the ability of educational systems to attract high quality teachers who will maintain their enthusiasm for teaching is dependent to a large degree upon the quality of accommodations accessible to them.

Teacher welfare concerns were raised in only a few briefs to the Northern Education Task Force, but their importance was considered to be of significance in providing a quality education for northern students. This contention was supported by the largest employer of teachers in the North. "The Board feels that, in order for a school to be successful in the delivery of a quality education program, there must be an element of staff stability in schools." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 40.) That staff stability is enhanced by attention to teacher welfare. During the past decade conditions have improved with subsequent positive results being noted. "In the past ten years, the teacher turnover has declined from near 50 percent per year to a current level of 20 percent. In spite of this perceived improvement, the Board feels that over the long term, after there is a desirable number of true 'northern' teachers on staff, this turnover rate must be further reduced." (Ibid., p. 40.)

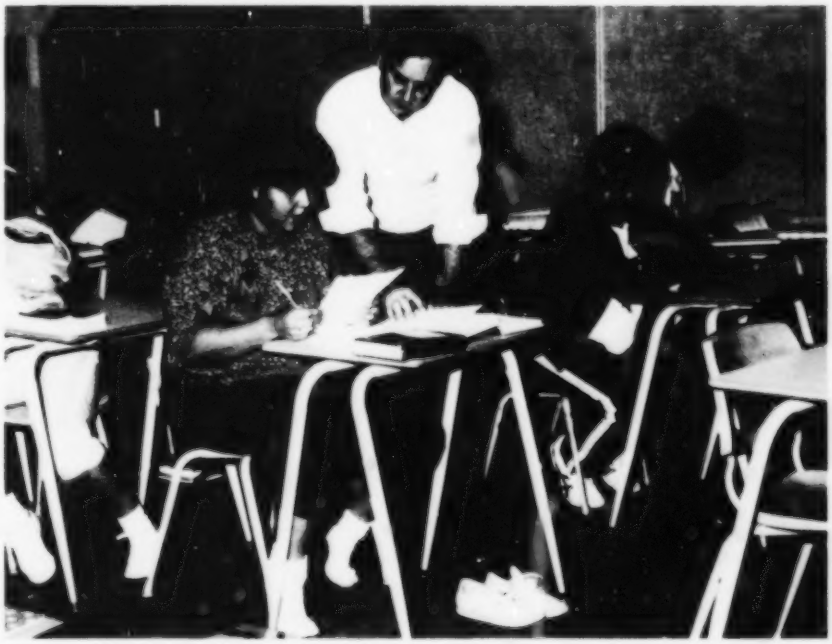
Educators are of the opinion that if the turnover rate is to be lowered further attention must be given to teacher welfare issues. "Present housing conditions for northern teachers vary tremendously in quality and quantity from community to community and even within communities. Recent funding increases to build new teacherages in a number of northern communities [is] appreciated, but if current structures are not properly maintained and upgraded, many will be uninhabitable soon." (*Northern Area Teachers' Association Brief,* p. 2.)

Relevant Background Information

The circumstances of northern education have often been used as the basis for increased funding from provincial departments of education. The greatest discrepancy appears to center on revenue generation capabilities of northern school divisions through property taxes. This is a source of a significant percentage of the total revenue available to southern school jurisdictions, but this is not the case in the North. "We have a very small assessment base here in Ile a la Crosse. We can not shift any reductions in grants into taxation that southern boards can do. This means that any reduction in grants is a direct loss to our division." (*Ile a la Crosse School Board Brief,* p. 4.) The largest school division in northern Saskatchewan also indicated difficulties with the property taxation situation. "Since the depressed economy of the north makes it impossible for many residents to pay their property taxes, the collection rate is quite low and there is a very heavy load of unpaid taxes." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief,* p. 1.)

Besides the taxation issue, the Saskatchewan Education report, *Directions*, identified several other needs that are of significance to northern students. "...the Committee received substantial evidence that these students are not achieving in schools and that their needs are not being met. Changes can be made that will help schools meet the unique needs of Northern and Indian/Native students." (*Directions*, p.49.) The Directions committee recommended that the following policies and procedures be implemented:

- native content should be integrated into the curriculum;
- native studies and language courses should be implemented at the secondary level;
- adjustments to the school year;
- creation of alternative ways of delivering instruction; and
- acquisition, production and circulation of materials for use in northern schools.



All of these recommendations were designed to meet the needs of northern students. Funding for these initiatives was to be provided through the Education Development Fund. As well, northern school divisions were to address the other recommendation of the *Directions* report by utilizing the Education Development Fund.

It is generally recognized throughout northern Canada that teacher accommodation is an essential component of teacher welfare conditions. The feasibility of purchasing one's own home in most northern communities is serverly limited. As a result, teacherages are usually provided by the educational authority. "Teachers in northern Saskatchewan are provided with subsidized housing...in order to encourage and retain a satisfactory teaching force." (*Northern Lights School Division Brief, p.41)* Maintenance and utilities are also supplied for teacherages at subsidized rates. "The maintenance system has been improved in order to provide teachers with adequate services to their teacherages and to improve teacher satisfation and morale." (Ibid., p. 41) The costs associated with this are high and mean an extra burden on northern school systems. "... They turned around and lowered the plant operations and maintenance refund to 70 percent instead of 90 percent. This meant to the Board that we lost about $150,000 from our overall grant." (*Ile a la Crosse School Board Brief,* p. 3.) The result has been considerable difficulty in maintaining teacherages to an acceptable standard.

This situation must be viewed in the context of the overall teacher recruitment situation in northern Saskatchewan. Historically, it has been difficult to attract teachers to the North. It is often necessary to recruit teachers from outside Saskatchewan to fill vacant positions. Concerted recruitment drives by northern educational jurisdictions and programs such as the Northern Teacher Education Program have, in the last few years, allowed northern school divisions to staff their schools with competent, northern-oriented teachers. They have also been able to hire teachers from areas of the country, particularly Ontario, where there has been a surplus of teachers. This surplus is disappearing as the demand for teachers in booming southern Ontario increases. Vigorous recruitment drives and the retention of current staff will be necessary. There is a distinct feeling that the success of these recruitment and retention efforts will be significantly influenced by teacher welfare issues such as housing.

Solutions to the funding problems have been offered. The Northern Branch of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association passed this resolution. "Be it resolved that the Minister initiate the formulation of policies, procedures and funding to ensure that the unique needs of northern and Indian/native students are met." (*Northern Branch of Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association Brief*, p. 1.) This resolution was subsequently adopted by the full assembly of the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association. More specifically, the Northern Lights School Division made the following recommendations:

- That steps be taken to ensure that northern boards of education have access to property taxes or grants in lieu of these taxes from all resource industries operating in northern Saskatchewan, as well as from provincial and federal properties and crown corporations;

- That the Foundation Grant Formula be examined in light of the question of a Computational Mill Rate which is assumed to be a source of revenue but which actually penalizes the North as a result of the property tax collection opportunities; and

- The problems faced in northern Saskatchewan are unique in many respects and thus require unique solutions. Even within the North it must be recognized that situations vary from community to community. The challenge will be there to diversify programs, teaching strategies and resources to reflect these differences. The department of Education must also reflect these added responsibilities and respond with appropriate support staff and appropriate funding. (*Northern Lights School Division Brief*, p. 1.)

Implementation Plan

If the above mentioned recommendations are to be implemented there is a definite need for a long-term plan. This plan should address the issues raised by northerners. For example, attention must be given to the taxation base including the situation whereby no revenue is generated from the mining companies, crown corporations, and federal government agencies involved in northern development. Grants in lieu of taxes, such as those provided by the Prince Albert Pulp Mill to the City of Prince Albert, may be a feasible alternative to the present situation. Recent initiatives by the Saskatchewan Power Corporation to provide funding for northern development provide another example. These options must be considered in any feasible long-term funding plan that is developed.

It is the opinion of the Northern Education Task Force that the recommendations concerning funding made by the Northern Lights School Division address the issues raised by northerners. The planning team currently reviewing the northern foundation grant funding formula should seriously consider implementing the above mentioned ideas as a priority item.

The Task Force has no objection to the plans by Saskatchewan Education to bring a greater rationalization to educational funding for northern school systems, but it strongly suggests that the incorporation of the preceding recommendations be included in that rationalization.

Any formula funding for northern education must recognize these factors:

- the current taxation situation in northern Saskatchewan;
- the unique cultural, social and economic circumstances of the North;
- the recognition of the differences in quality that exist between southern and northern educational facilities; and
- the difficulties presented by isolation, geography, and distance.

As well, it is necessary that a set of criteria be created which recognizes the need for provision of northern staff accommodation and which also recognizes that such housing can only be maintained and operated at a much higher cost than in southern Saskatchewan. It is further recommended that the need for subsidization of the full costs of operations and maintenance be recognized. These criteria should be developed prior to the making of budgetary decisions affecting the 1990-91 fiscal year. There will be a need for a catch-up clause since some of the present units are well below acceptable standards. All of these aspects of life in the North and their effect on education must form an integral part of any review process. The subsequent rationalization of funding for northern education would then more closely meet the needs identified by northerners in their presentations to the Northern Education Task Force.

Evaluation

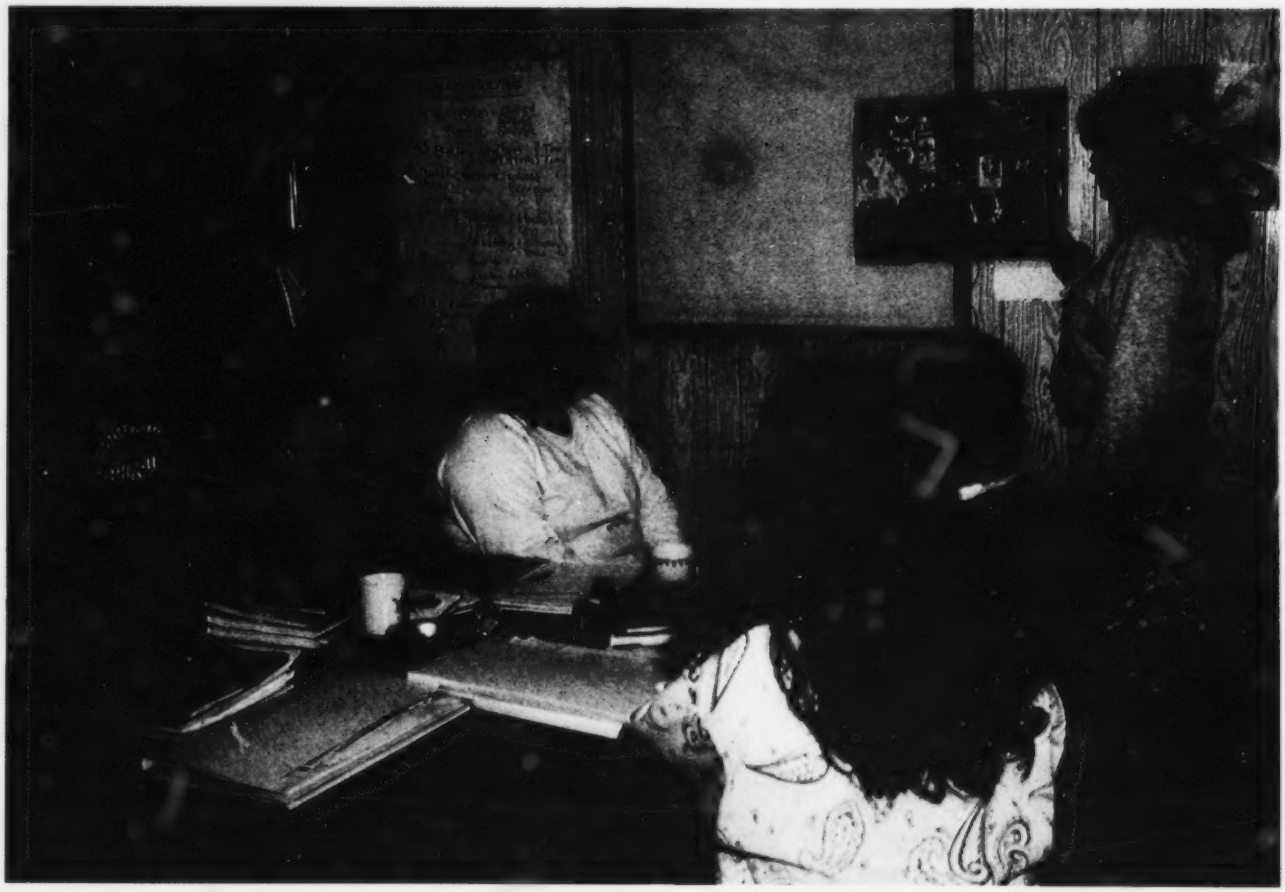
The Implementation Committee should request regular reports from Saskatchewan Education's financial planning team. The internal review of funding for northern education should be completed in the near future. From the results of that review, it will be possible to determine the extent to which the concerns of northerners have been incorporated into Saskatchewan Education's new northern funding formula. Officials from the Facilities and School Grants branches of Saskatchewan Education should be able to provide a progress report to the Implementation Committee during this fiscal year. The 1989-90 budget will provide the first real indication of any change.

Chapter Four

Challenges for the Future

Introduction

The preceding sections have discussed the findings of the Northern Education Task Force. Recommendations, based on those findings, were formulated. During the discussions carried out by the Task Force, particularly in the development of the recommendations, points were raised concerning the future of northern education. The challenges are formidable. There were areas which the Task Force believed were of special significance. As a result, it was considered essential that particular mention be made of those concerns. As well, the reactions of northern education stakeholders to the Task Force recommendations were solicited.



Role of the Implementation Committee

In order to insure that the recommendations proposed in this Task Force report receive the required attention, the establishment of an Implementation Committee is being proposed. It is envisaged that this committee would be comprised of current Task Force members and representatives from Saskatchewan Education. Its life span would cover the next two to three years. Its goal would be to assess future educational developments in northern Saskatchewan, particularly as they related to the findings and recommendations of the Northern Education Task Force. The specific duties of the Implementation Committee would include the following:

- to report to northerners on the progress being made with respect to the implementation of recommendations;
- to suggest the priority of funds set aside by Saskatchewan Education for the purpose of establishing pilot projects designed in response to the recommendations of the Task Force;
- to maintain contact with northern communities and to receive reports from educational jurisdictions in order to determine northerners' reactions to educational initiatives;
- to ensure close liaison with educational agencies throughout northern Saskatchewan; and
- to prepare an annual report on their findings which would include an assessment of the success of the recommendation implementation process.

Implementation Process

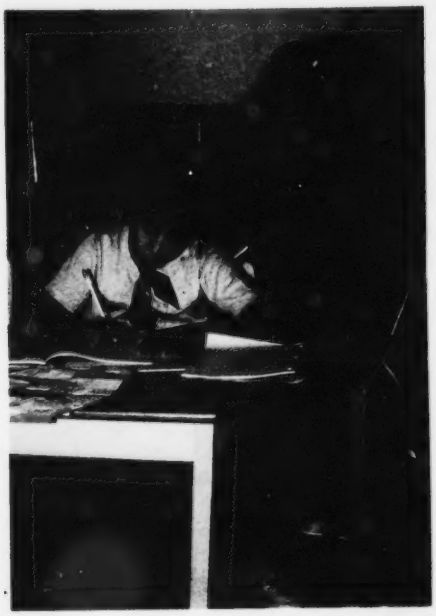
To provide the Implementation Committee with expert educational advice and to provide the link between Saskatchewan Education and the Implementation Committee it was suggested that a position be created in the Northern Division. That position should be filled by an experienced northern teacher who is knowledgeable about and empathetic towards northerners' educational concerns. This position would allow for the day-to-day assessment of the implementation process. It would also provide the needed support for these recommendations in relation with the northern educational decision-makers. Much of the research and data collection identified in the Northern Education Task Force report could be carried out through the creation of this position. It would give considerable added strength to the role of the Implementation Committee.

Duties associated with this position would include the following:

- to provide liaison between the Implementation Committee and Saskatchewan Education;
- to provide a communication link between the Implementation Committee and the northern educational jurisdictions;
- to collect data on the implementation process including the proposed pilot projects;
- to initiate research projects as recommended in the Northern Education Task Force Report;
- to coordinate the activities of the Implementation Committee; and
- to oversee the implementation process.

Stakeholders Response to the Northern Education Task Force Interim Report

As an initial step towards soliciting northerners' responses to the recommendations, an Interim Report was distributed to the major educational stakeholders in the North. Their reactions were considered an important part of the overall, on-going assessment of northern education. They also provided a preliminary indication of the likelihood of educational jurisdictions adopting and implementing the Task Force recommendations. Those reactions are summarized in **Appendix III**.



Goals of Education for the North

Although it was considered inappropriate for the Northern Education Task Force to formulate goal statements for northern educational decision-makers, it was thought to be essential to stress the importance of setting long-term goals. These goals should provide an overall framework for future educational developments in the North. They should be based on an in-depth needs assessment. Local input, as it was solicited for this report, must be maximized. That needs assessment would then be followed by goal-setting exercises at the local, district, and regional levels. The Task Force strongly encourages educational authorities in northern Saskatchewan to pursue this activity.

In accord with the above request, Saskatchewan Education, Northern Division submitted the following statements on northern education for consideration.

Saskatchewan Education, Northern Division:

- Believes that all northern people should have opportunities for life-long learning and the development of their full potential; and that all northern people should have access to an educational system which will prepare them for a changing society, which is responsive to their individual needs, and which will promote a sense of dignity and respect for self, others, and the environment.

- Recognizes the need for flexible, innovative solutions to northern educational problems and is committed to promote the pursuit of educational excellence in the North.
- Commits itself to work in cooperation with the people of the North to initiate, facilitate, and coordinate the provision of services which will enable them to achieve their educational, employment, and personal development goals so that they may participate fully in the economic and social development of Saskatchewan.
- Supports the efforts of northern people to preserve cultural knowledge and traditions as well as their efforts to adapt them to change in the North.

Task Force Priorities

The Northern Education Task Force undertook an exercise designed to set the priorities of a number of initiatives necessary to the implementation of its recommendations. It was felt that these projects, which would be funded by Saskatchewan Education in cooperation with northern educational authorities, were essential to the successful implementation of the recommendations. After much thoughtful consideration, intense discussion and deliberation the following projects have been identified as priorities. It should be noted that merit was not the only consideration. Factors such as cost, chances for success, immediacy and local educational climate were also a part of the process.

The first priority was identified as being parental involvement in the school systems. It was felt that student success would be enhanced by the involvement and education of the northern adult population. The value of education must become an accepted part of northerners' attitudes. To achieve this objective and to insure the implementation of the recommendation pertaining to parental involvement, it was strongly suggested that Saskatchewan Education provide the necessary funding for a communications officer position to be attached to one of the northern school jurisdictions.

The provision of early childhood education programs for pre-schoolers was considered essential to the future positive development of a success-oriented school system. As a result, the establishment of a nursery school program in a selected northern community along the guidelines put forward to the Task Force recommendation on early childhood education was given second priority. This pilot project will provide the model for future pre-school programming. It will require careful scrutiny and in-depth assessment of its effectiveness. Community reaction will need to be gauged thoroughly.

A third priority was attached to distance education. Due to the geographical and isolation factors associated with northern Saskatchewan, it was considered necessary to put to use many of the recent technological advances in distance education. Initiatives have been undertaken with respect to the delivery of adult education programs in the North. The Northern Education Task Force believes a pilot project at the secondary level to be a positive measure.

The provision of high school programming for adult learners as a cooperative endeavor between K-12 and adult educators was given the fourth priority as a pilot project. The opportunity for a cooperative effort currently exists. The Task Force felt that the identification of that opportunity for a pilot project would provide the basis for future developments in this area. If carried out properly, it could become a model for continued cooperation between in-school and post-school jurisdictions.

One of the major concerns identified by the Task Force was the lack of Dene speaking teachers in northern schools. Although the Northern Teacher Education Program has provided a significant number of native teachers for northern schools, those graduates have been concentrated in the Cree speaking communities. As a result, it was felt that an emphasis on the training of Dene speakers as teachers would be appropriate. Since one of the problems in meeting this objective has been the academic standing of many Dene candidates, the Task Force proposed the establishment of a bridging program by Northlands Career College. This program would be designed to facilitate the successful entry of Dene speakers into the Northern Teacher Education Program. Such a pilot project was judged to be a fifth priority by the Task Force.

The Professional Access Program proposed by the Northern Teacher Education Program Advisory Council was selected as a sixth priority. The reaction by northerners for the need to have at least two years university training available in a northern community was thought to be best addressed by the Northern Teacher Education Program proposal. As a result, this pilot project was designated as the Task Force's sixth priority.

The seventh priority was given to the implementation of a full-fledged counselling program. Strong support for the initiatives already undertaken in this area was expressed. It was believed important that those measures be expanded. As one of the future developments in the provision of adequate counselling for all northern students, it was recommended that a second training program for guidance counsellors be initiated. This program would be funded by Saskatchewan Education and provided by Northlands Career College.

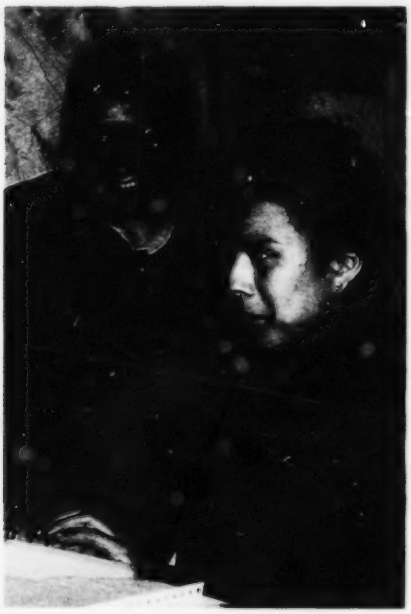
The difficulties inherent in educating children who come to school with insufficient nutrition was cited by the Task Force as a major problem. A pilot project based on the southern, urban "Community School" model was identified as an eighth priority. It was suggested that a northern school be selected as a site for the development and implementation of a pilot project. That choice will have to be based on community support and need factors since it will have to be a cooperative effort between the school and the community. Careful scrutiny of the effectiveness of this initiative will have to be undertaken as it should serve as a model for other northern schools.

A possible solution to the problems experienced by student parents in the northern school systems was provided by Dene High School at La Loche. The Task Force believes their suggested day care to be worthy of concrete action. As a result, this has been identified as a pilot project which was granted a ninth priority. Its implementation should be possible during September 1989. Included in the implementation process should be a data collection mechanism whereby student attendance, achievement and reaction may be assessed.

A number of other pilot projects were considered for implementation during the 1989-90 school year. No priority was assigned to these projects. In general, they are relatively small undertakings requiring only minor amounts of funding to establish. These would be pilot projects in the following areas:

- the development of culture-free, student progress testing devices;
- support for Cree and Dene language course development; and
- the establishment of an inter-agency coordinating committee.

All of these initiatives would be coordinated through the Northern Division of Saskatchewan Education.



Future Solutions to Problems in Northern Education

The problems faced by northern educational systems have been well documented. The solutions to those problems are not always readily identifiable. Many educational issues are actually solvable only within the context of change within society. For example, there is no doubt that the high levels of unemployment, the conditions of poverty, and the inadequacy of social and health services in the North affect the performance of students in the schools. Educational authorities cannot readily change those circumstances, but even in those instances where alterations to the education program can be made it is often difficult to determine exactly what should be done.

Educational change is significantly determined by the attitudes of the group that the change is directed towards. Thus the chances of introducing successful change are not always related to the proposed interventions. The attitude of northerners will determine the success of the changes proposed in this document. They must assume ownership of the educational system in the North since it is no longer an alien, imposed system. They must recognize the need for change and they must support the proposals for change. The recommendations made in this study reflect the present collective desires of northerners for alterations in the education currently provided. Because the recommendations are formulated from board-based input by northerners it is hoped that northerners will accept them as their own.

Assuming that acceptance for change is present among northerners, the next step will be to develop programs which address northern concerns. That will become the responsibility of educators. It is hoped that program development will be based on sound research and state-of-the-art pedagogy. It has often happened that educational programs have changed, but those changes were not based on sound research data. The result has all too often been a hodgepodge of so called "northern" programs. It has also meant many instances of the re-invention of the wheel. Pedagogical and program research which relates to northern education must provide the foundation for future developments. This will take time, money, human energy, a commitment to quality, and the support of everyone involved in northern education.

In some instances the problems confronting northern education are beginning to be addressed. For example, the implementation of the new Core Curriculum in northern schools should enhance the educational program. The child-centered, inter-disciplinary approach fostered by the Core Curriculum should have a positive effect on northern education. As well, the allowance for locally-developed courses of study should stimulate the growth of culturally-relevant linguistic and historical classes based on northern factors.

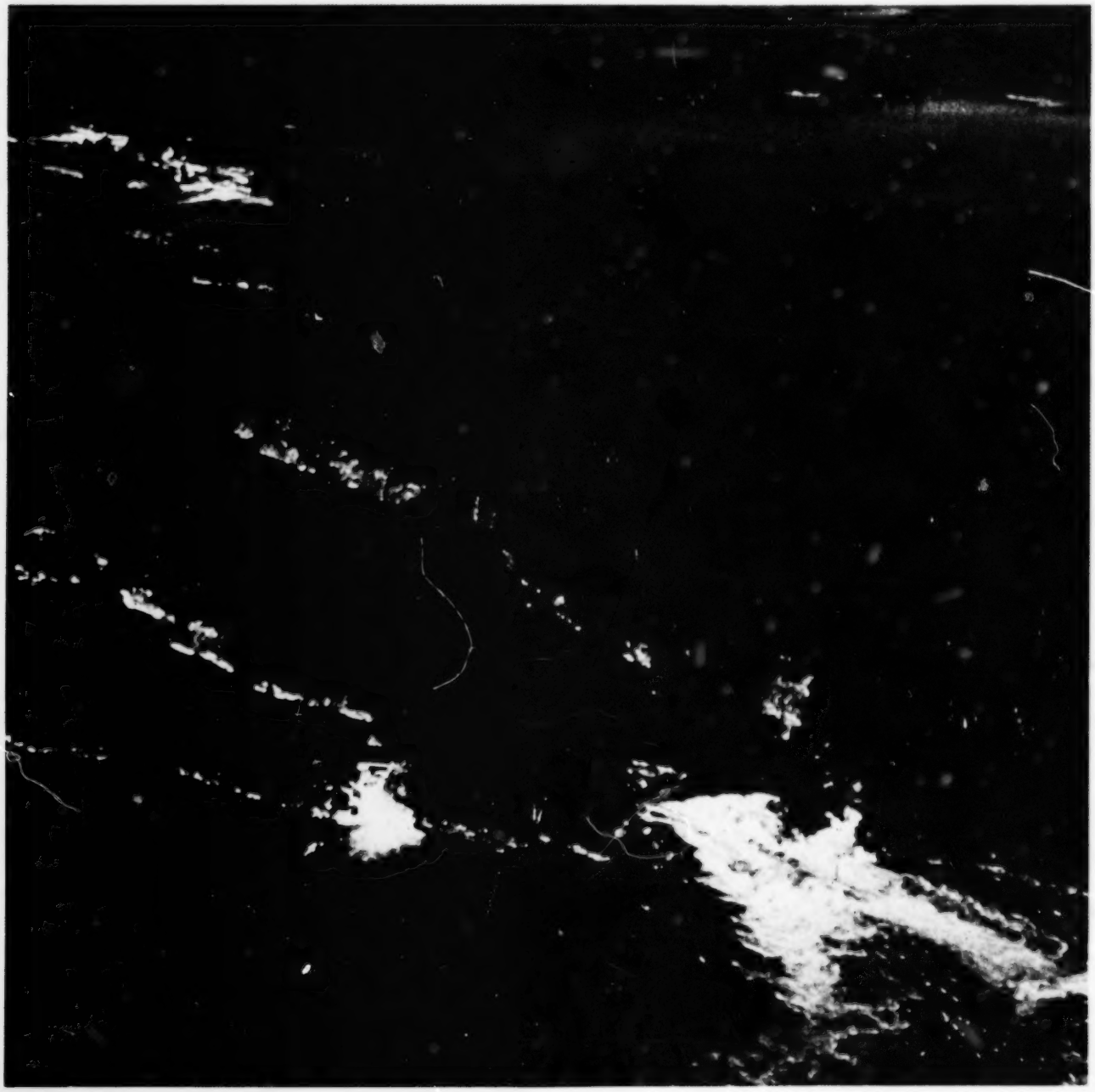
In order that the provisions of the Core Curriculum be fully implemented and that the unique set of circumstances confronting northern students be recognized it will be necessary to recruit and train teachers suited to work in the North. They will have to be prepared to face a variety of challenges. They will have to be knowledgeable about the culture and history of the North. They will need a good understanding of pedagogy as it relates to the specific needs of the northern student population. A solid core of those teachers already exists, but it will be necessary to expand that base.

Unfortunately, some of the problems facing northern students present more difficult barriers to overcome. Uppermost in this category are the problems associated with drug and alcohol abuse. Northern children often come from family situations which are disrupted by alcohol abuse. Northern adolescents face drug related problems as serious as those found anywhere in Canada. Children may be neglected or abandoned due to the use of alcohol by their parents. Youngsters often experiment with gas or glue sniffing. Teenagers may become serious drug users to escape feelings of frustration or despair.

The solutions to alcohol and drug abuse, and to other serious difficulties faced by northern children, are often only to be found in better economic and social conditions for northerners generally. The overall economic and social condition of the North has a tremendous impact on educational attainment. A direct correlation exists between the economy and educational success in the school system. The overall situation will only improve through a major coordinated effort on the part of all of those involved in northern development. With that improvement, a corresponding enhancement of the northern child's progress in the school system will unquestionably be forthcoming. Accompanying those developments will likely be

an increased recognition of the value of education and support for the school system through greater participation in the educational process.

That does not mean that change is unnecessary or that improvements are not possible. There are numerous ways in which northern school systems can be enhanced. It is hoped that the recommendations made in this report will foster that enhancement process. The Northern Education Task Force members believe that the foundation for a solid educational system exists. With the utilization of building blocks which are based on the views and suggestions of northerners the system can be further enhanced. The information and recommendations contained in this report should add significantly to the positive aspects of the northern school systems.



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Briefs Presented to Northern Education Task Force

Action Consulting Group, Inc. (Wayne Dunn)

Athabasca Training Council (Jack Stein)

Beauval, Thirty-Five Community Members

Beauval, Panel Discussion and Radio Phone-In Program

Beauval Interagency Group (Joe Daigneault, on behalf of residents of Beauval)

Buffalo Narrows, Thirteen Community Members

Buffalo Narrows Friendship Center (Philip Chartier)

Churchill High School

Creighton, Twenty-Three Community Members

Cumberland House, Local School Board Representatives

Cumberland House, Twelve Community Members

Edward Charlette-Cook

Fond du Lac Indian Band

Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, Inc.

Ile a la Crosse Teachers' Association

Ile a la Crosse, Anonymous

Ile a la Crosse School Board, Raymond Laliberte

Ile a la Crosse, Fourteen Community Members

La Loche, Six Community Members

La Ronge, MBC Radio Phone-In Program

La Ronge, The Concerned Parent Group (Marg Beament, Valerie Owen)

La Ronge, Forty-Five Community Members

La Ronge, Parents of French Immersion (Mary McCann)

Lake Athabasca Producers

Minahik Waskahigan School (Wayne Little)

Minahik Waskahigan School (John Campbell, Vice Principal), December 6, 1988

Minahik Waskahigan School (John Campbell, Vice Principal), January 11, 1989

NorSask Native Outreach, Athabasca Basin

Northern Lights School Division #113

Northern Area Teachers' Association (Tony Oscienny)

Northern Teacher Education Program (Michael Tymchak, Rick Laliberte)

Northern Lights School Division, Indian and Metis Curriculum Consultant (Earl Cook)

Northern Lights School Board Representative (Rick Laliberte)

Northern Recreation Coordinating Committee (Joe Roberts)

Northern Village of Sandy Bay (Ina Fietz Ray, Alderperson)

Northlands Career College Instructors (Allan Fedak, Audrey Harsh)

Northlands Career College Instructor (Cecil Chiu)

Northlands Career College Board (Neil Clark, Principal and Eve McKay)

Pelican Narrows School Committee

Pelican Narrows, Anonymous by Request (#1)

Pelican Narrows, Anonymous by Request (#2)

Pelican Narrows, Twenty-Seven Community Members

Peter Ballantyne Band

Pinehouse, Twenty-Five Community Members

Pinehouse Concerned Parents (L. Iron, M. Maurice, R. Natomagan)

Pinehouse Local School Board

Sandy Bay, Unknown

Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association (Lorene Bonnett)

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (Ronald Kruzeniski)

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (George Gerget, Garry Genge)

SIAST, Woodland Campus (Bob Gervais, Gerry Stroshein)

St. Pascal School, Don Wanhella

Stony Rapids, Thirty Community Members

Timber Bay School Teacher

Town of La Ronge (Lyle Brooks, Alderman)

University of Saskatchewan, Division of Extension and Community Relations (Dr. Ko Vandonselaar)

Wollaston Lake School Committee

Appendices

I Terms of Reference of the Northern Education Task Force

II Role of the Northern Education Task Force Secretariat

III Summary of Stakeholders' Responses to the Task Force Interim Report

Appendix I

Terms of Reference of the Northern Education Task Force

1. The Task Force will define measurable expectations for each component of the primary, secondary, and post-secondary education systems in northern Saskatchewan.

2. The Task Force will review the past progress and achievements of education in the North and identify critical issues and concerns which northern educators face today.

3. The Task Force will assess the present performance of the educational systems in terms of the expectations they set by conducting fact-finding with the assistance of the Task Force Secretariat.

4. The Task Force will act as a forum in which northerners can voice their concerns about education.

   a. They will meet with appropriate governing bodies, boards, and associations; administrative and instructional personnel; support staff of the school systems; representatives from band schools; relevant university faculties; social service agencies; student and parent representatives and other interest groups, to determine their concerns about education in the North.

   b. The Task Force will hold public meetings in northern centers at which all interested parties will be invited to make presentations.

5. The Task Force will develop and evaluate options in programming and curriculum in order to address the concerns and issues they have identified. They will present their recommendations to the Minister in the autumn of 1989.

Appendix II

Role of the Northern Education Task Force Secretariat

The Northern Education Task Force Secretariat will assist the Task Force in carrying out its mandate. The Secretariat will:

1. Prepare agendas, record minutes, issue correspondence, and arrange public meetings;
2. Manage Task Force finances including expenses for travel, meetings, and report preparation;
3. Prepare status reports for the Task Force;
4. Facilitate the implementation of a collaborative model, under the leadership of the Task Force, by which recommendations are derived;
5. Gather relevant information for the consideration of the Task Force; and
6. Assist the Task Force in preparing interim and final drafts of the recommendation report for the Minister.

Appendix III

Summary of Stakeholders' Responses to the Task Force Interim Report

As a means of soliciting northerners' responses to the initial recommendations of the Northern Education Task Force, an Interim Report was distributed to major educational stakeholders in the North for comment and constructive criticism. Their reactions were considered an important part of the Task Force's overall, on-going assessment of northern education. The responses also provided a preliminary indication of the likelihood of educational jurisdictions adopting and implementing Task Force recommendations.

Approximately 200 stakeholders were presented with the Interim Report. Formal responses were received from the following seven bodies and individuals.

- Northern Area Teachers' Association
- Northern Teacher Education Program, Inc. (NORTEP)
- Northern Lights School Division Board of Education
- Creighton School Division Board of Education
- Superintendent of Creighton and Ile a la Crosse School Divisions
- Northlands Career College Board of Directors
- Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, Woodland Campus

General Reactions

All responding stakeholders expressed their support for the process of educational review and needed change undertaken by the Task Force. A general theme in the majority of responses was the necessity for continual communication between the providers of educational services and the public they serve as well as for an enhancement of inter-agency consultation.

Another theme common to most of the responses was the need for an implementation and coordination mechanism for initiatives undertaken to address the concerns identified by the Task Force and a means for stakeholders to monitor progress, share concerns, and to express these concerns to government. All respondents cited a need for greater financial resources for staff, maintenance and expansion of facilities, and program development.

The following is a brief summary of responses to the Northern Education Task Force Recommendations as presented to the Stakeholders in the *Interim Report*.

#1 [Early Childhood Programs]

In general, the stakeholders concurred with the Task Force that early educational experiences would be of benefit, but most responses stress the role of the family in early childhood education and believe that efforts to support parental involvement should take precedence over formal programs. Caution was also expressed that formal early childhood programs would place extraordinary demands on funding and personnel. Institutional stakeholders expressed a willingness to develop training programs for personnel providing formal early childhood programs.

#2 [Teaching of Native Languages]

The stakeholders agreed with the Task Force that, in some schools, teaching of the early years in the language of the home and community would be of benefit, especially if teachers were fully bi- or multi-lingual.

The recommendation for elective secondary level credit courses in native languages was supported by all stakeholders. However, some stakeholders urged that fluency in written and spoken English be given priority. Some stakeholders proposed the establishment of a "Native Language Institute".

#3 [Saskatchewan Education Initiatives]

In general, the stakeholders concurred with the Task Force on the categories of initiatives to be undertaken. However, some stakeholders stated that mechanisms to develop a specifically "northern curriculum" need to be critically examined and that the concepts of "culture free" testing and "continuous progress" could not be supported as presented.

Other stakeholders proposed an integrated development of northern curriculum in which teachers from the field, northern teacher education programs, and Saskatchewan Education collaborate to "design and pilot" projects.

Also suggested for consideration were the following: "more proactive teacher involvement with parents and communities", "creative delivery of the existing curricula", "rotation of teachers ... when requested by communities", "more stringent evaluation of teachers for permanent The certification", and "more rigorous evaluation of teachers ..."

#4 [School Nutrition]

In general, the stakeholders concurred with the Task Force that programs which promote proper nutrition in the home and at school should be pursued. Parent, community, and business involvement in nutrition projects was suggested.

#5 [School Recreation]

In general, the stakeholders concurred with the Task Force that recreation programs and facilities should be improved. Further, there was a suggestion that stress should be placed on improved programs and trained staff and that there be an integration of school and community use of recreation programs and facilities.

#6 [Parental Involvement]

All stakeholders expressed the need for parents to develop a sense of ownership in the educational system. Measures to inform parents and to encourage their participation should be undertaken.

#7 [Guidance Programs]

All stakeholders expressed the need for more trained counsellors, especially for those who speak native languages. Stakeholders also stressed the need for expanded programs to train native northerners for counsellor positions.

#8 [School Year]

All stakeholders concurred with the Task Force that there should be locally initiated flexibility in the school year.

#9 [School Standards and Regional High Schools]

The responding stakeholders were in general agreement with the Task Force recommendation, but some suggested that art, music, and drama should also receive increased attention together with mathematics and science. Some stakeholders suggest that distance education techniques should be explored for the delivery of programs in communities with enrollments too low for formal classes.

#10 [Day Care]

The responding stakeholders were in general agreement with the Task Force recommendation. Several stakeholders stressed the need for Family Life Programs to address the underlying causes of the problem.

#11 [Adult Basic Education]

The responding stakeholders were in general agreement with the Task Force recommendation. All respondents stressed the value of ongoing communication and planning for Adult Basic Education and other skill or academic development programs.

#12 [Employment-Oriented Training]

The majority of responding stakeholders concurred with the recommendation, but suggested that the mechanisms linking training to employment be formalized. Some stakeholders suggested that locating more training institutions in the North would be an appropriate means to address the problem.

#13 [Post-School Training]

The majority of responding stakeholders concurred with the recommendation, but suggested that the concept of "quota" systems should be critically examined to assure that the quality of education is not compromised. The suggestion was again made that locating training institutions in the North should be considered and that means to increase the utilization of the Woodland Campus of SIAST by northerners be explored. As well, increased support for northern students to attend the urban universities was proposed including quotas, scholarships, and increased counselling.

Several of the respondents supported the concept of "bridging" and pre-technical post-secondary programs. Specifically, the need for preparing more Dene speaking northerners to enter into programs such as NORTEP was cited.

#14 [Financial Assistance]

There was general agreement with this recommendation.

#15 [Education Coordinating Committee]

There was general agreement with this recommendation. A broadly based Coordinating Committee is seen as a vital means of continuing the support and input of stakeholders in northern education.

#16 [Teacher Accommodation]

Some stakeholders suggested that the issue of teacher accommodations should be properly dealt with as a specific case of recommendation #17.

#17 [Funding Levels]

All stakeholders agreed with the Task Force recommendation.